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NOTES

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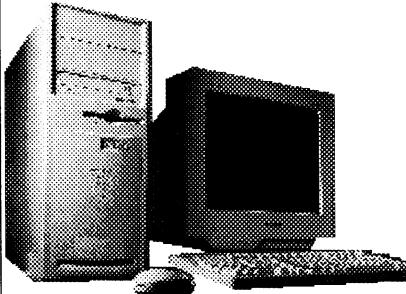
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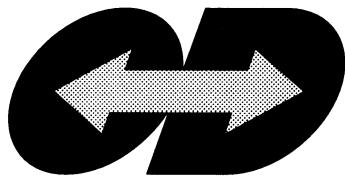
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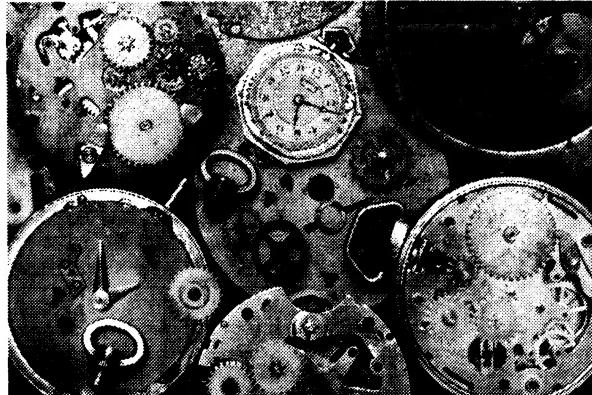
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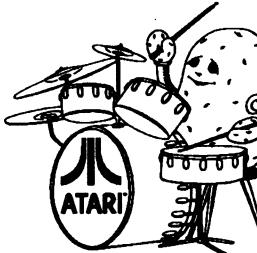
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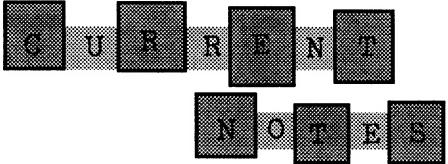


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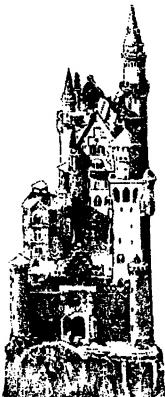
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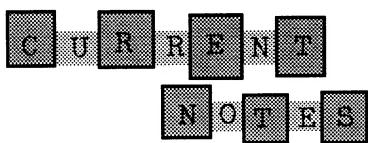
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The syphilitic dork who phones the office, yells, "Super NES RULES, man!" and then hangs up. He's the reason we all keep going. We're all terrified we'll wind up the same way. You know . . . standing on a busy street corner, stoned, hollering about socialism, spending hours making crank calls, and giggling alone in the dark.

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Cover Design:
'Garbage Road' by Howie using Calamus SL and Outline Art 3.

F U T U R E S

robert boardman

In the last few weeks, two disconnected events got me thinking even more than usual(!) about the future of computers and the focus of Current Notes. The first was a call to visit a couple, their dogs, and their Atari 800XL computer. The second was the installation and attempt at using the STiK/CAB suite on the Current Notes desktop publishing system. What do these two events have in common and what do they have to do with the future of computing and of Current Notes?

For those who don't know or don't remember, the Atari 800XL is about fifteen years old. It goes back almost to the dawn of the PC computer era - the early 80s. That's right, personal desktop computers have been around for less than twenty years.

What has changed in those twenty years? I see one major change between the Atari, Apple, Commodore and IBM 8-bit machines and today's models: WYSIWYG (most of the time). Did somebody mention speed? Yes, except that, for most of us, processor speed is relevant only to screen redraws. We need high processor speed so we don't have to wait very long for major changes in information to be visible on the screen. Very few home computer users need machines which run at a "blistering" 66 MHZ or 133 MHZ or whatever. For home users, the rate-determining step is the typing speed of the user. That's not true for those doing CAD/CAMM or complicated desktop publishing or massive statistical compilations. But for most of us, typing speed rather than processor speed really determines how fast the computer runs.

So for my new friends who own that 800XL, and for the many people who have written and talked to me about older models of computers, the question is: why throw them out? Why trade them in? If your machine does what you want it to do, and you are happy with it, keep it. An

What I got works just fine, thanks.

8-bit computer works much faster than I could ever type (although I do prefer an 80 column screen). Having hard drive storage is much more convenient than using floppy disks too. Assuming you are working most of the time disconnected from the rest of the computing world, there's no compelling reason to upgrade to something else.

What does all this have to do with STiK/CAB? The one major change in how people think about computers has been the development of a voluntary linking of computer resources - the Internet. There are some basic equipment needs which must be met in order to be part of this high energy interchange. Those needs can be fulfilled by almost any computer built in the last fifteen years. Whether you have an Atari 800XL or a Pentium Pro-166, you can enjoy and profit from the seemingly infinite resources available on the Net. Essential equipment includes: a computer with a serial (modem) port (1 standard RS232 port, or an interface to an RS232 port), one modem rated at 14,400 bps (more is better), one phone line and that's it! The whole package, including the computer, can easily cost less than \$500. The computer should have the ability to store large amounts of information quickly and easily. An 80-column colour screen is good, but not absolutely necessary. And if you don't have either a recent Apple computer or a Windows-capable box, then what you will see will be text, so colour is of no benefit anyway.

Premises:

1) Computers have not been around very long. Less than twenty years in fact. The technology is still very new and we should expect it to keep changing for a few years yet. That means it will continue to cost lots of money to keep up with the trends.

2) The most interesting thing to happen with computers is networking, the linking and sharing of information locally and internationally. At present, almost any computer built in the last fifteen years can be used to participate to some degree in this global network.

Conclusion:

There's money to be made selling information to computer users, but only if the seller can control the information and/or the distribution technology. Novell is a good exam-

ple of a company that is able to make money through local distribution technology. At the moment, the international distribution channel, the Internet, is chaotic and anarchic, not tightly restricted either in content or in distribution. But there are changes coming.

The big money people in cable TV want us to buy a \$500 "set top" box: a "computer" that will sit on the top of a TV and hook into the Internet through the existing cable TV network. Systems are already being tested in various communities in Canada and the U.S.A. Even if these set top computers have keyboards and internal storage (and that may not be the case with every one), the owner/user will have the choice of what information to interact with and to store within the limits of what the cable company wants you to receive. That's very much like the cable system right now. I can choose what show to watch and what show to record, as long as it is on the list provided to me by the cable company.

I think the development of the computer industry is somewhat analogous to the development of the auto industry. In the beginning there were many, many backyard builders of automobiles. There were even four competing engine technologies: steam, electric, gasoline, and diesel. Eventually a small number of companies took control of almost all of the con-

sumer market, settling on an engine which was not the most efficient, but the most profitable for them. In the computer industry, we have made the switch from large numbers of builders and designer/sellers to one design of hardware (Intel CPUs and clones) and one design of software (DOS) which together dominate the market in North America. Only a few others sit on the periphery.

Wide spread use of the Internet means information can flow freely among millions of people around the world. That information is accessible to almost anyone with almost any kind of computer. Once obtained electronically, that information can then be shared with many others, through educational programmes, through newsletters, through gossip. One computer with access to the Internet can feed information to thousands of people through other means of communication. People with information can make choices, people with easy access to reliable information can make good choices. For me, one of the pillars of democracy is the "informed decision," decisions based on reliable, confirmable information.

I believe one of the ways those in power stay in power is by controlling the flow of information to those who are not in power; power here does not mean just electoral - political power. Information is not power - the control of information is

power. Those who have power want to stay in power, so they take control of information if at all possible. If they can, they will. I don't believe those with major economic, social and political power will always act altruistically. If I could, I would push you to reject the "set top box," because it puts controls on information which is now more-or-less freely available. Support the continuation of the Internet as it is, despite its chaos and its idiosyncrasies. That said, I will not support any person or material which exploits or advocates the exploitation of children, or the domination of one individual or a group of individuals over another individual or group. There should not be any place on the Internet where "kiddie porn" or sexism or racism can exist.

Current Notes will continue to focus on the users of computers, rather than the computers. We are not so much interested in the various waves of technology as we are interested in how our readers can use technology to meet their needs. In many ways we want to take Atari's old slogan "power without the price" and see where it can take us. Our subscribers might not all use Atari computers. Our articles might not all focus on Atari hardware and software. But we will continue to focus on how people use computers.▲

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"Atari is Dead!"

Atari Corp merges with JTS! End of an era or new horizons?

**analysis by
eric march**

It has become a mantra over the years, chanted by stock analysts, computer and gaming magazines, so-called experts and nay-sayers alike. For some reason they find it comforting to predict Atari's death, as though stating the undeniable fact that The Company That Just Wouldn't Quit finally did, in some way assuages any doubt there is justice in the world. Perhaps it massages their bruised egos which shattered when bigger and more prominent companies such as Commodore met their final demise under more cordial financial positions, while Atari just kept right on surviving. Where's the justice in that?

But The Company That Just Wouldn't Quit, never did. In spite, or perhaps because of its past successes and failures, Atari has hung on by its fingernails to a legacy that spans decades. From Pong in 1972 to the 2600 in 1977 to the Jaguar in 1994, from the 400 in 1979 to the Falcon030 in 1993. From Nolan Bushnell to Warner Communications, from Jack Tramiel to sons Sam, Gary and Leonard, Atari has survived the storms though (if I might be so bold) they have not weathered them well in recent years.

Now, The Experts would have you believe that legacy comes finally, even mercifully, to a close. Atari is merging with JTS Enterprises, becoming to all appearances a subordinate to the new manufacturer of disk drives. But Atari dead? Sheerest rubbish, I say.

JTS Enterprises makes disk drives. It was founded in 1994 by Jugi Tandon, former CEO of the well known Tandon Corporation, which also manufactured disk drives. Their pilot project is an inexpensive removable media 3" disk drive that can store 800 megabytes of data,

and yet is every bit as fast as conventional hard disks. By comparison, the popular Iomega Zip Drive stores either 20 or 100 megs of data and in its SCSI incarnation achieves about 2 megabytes per second sustained transfer speed (about the speed of a 13x speed CD-ROM drive). Even the much touted SyQuest removable cartridge drives cannot store 800 megabytes of data.

But JTS is a new company and does not have the funds to capitalize this pilot project through to completion in the fiercely competitive storage media market. JTS has to launch a very costly advertising campaign to become recognised as a potential success in the business. And that is where Atari comes in. Through the merger and the accompanying bridge loan of \$50 million from Atari, Tandon's company will be able to realize its goals. At the same time, Atari will get a new lease on life as it were, one which is potentially more rewarding than it's more recent projects.

The merged company will be called JTS Corporation and the Atari label will remain as a separate entity within JTS. The Atari Jaguar 64 will be pushed hard until existing inventory runs out, at which point the board of directors will reassess the product and decide its fate. Atari's current management will maintain seats on the board of the new company, but ultimately the control rests in the hands of CEO Jugi Tandon.

"The Tramiels killed Atari!"

It's another popular phrase uttered by those who support Atari's products, but are loathe to give the company's management any credence. Whether or not Atari's management or mis-management led ultimately to where Atari now stands, the Atari/JTS merger should serve to quell such rantings. Though Jack, Sam and Gary will sit on the board of directors, their's will be voices in a chorus, no longer carrying the weight of final judgement as they did at Atari Corp. Now, the Tramiels can not be held ultimately responsible for JTS Corporation's rise or fall, and as such can not be the target of phrases such as the one uttered above. Corporate decisions will now rest in the hands of the entire board. Ultimately this will lead to better decisions and hopefully, greater success. But the real question, the one burning in the minds of most Atari users,

is how this ordeal will affect them. For that question I can only provide speculation. Jaguar owners will see no interruption in the flow of new software for their playful cat, at least for the time being.

Atari computer users? Now there are some interesting ramifications here. Since JTS manufactures disk drives Atari will, after a fashion, be returning to the computer business once the merger becomes a reality. Where that will lead one can only guess, but it is entirely possible that Atari may return to making full computers again. Or perhaps JTS Corporation as a whole might; Tandon Corp did, and depending on the success of the new company, there will be a lot of experience in that field on the board of directors. It could just come to pass that we may see a new Atari or JTS machine.

Shareholders of ATC stock will also find that collectively, they'll own 60% of the merged corporation. This can only mean good things. For a start, Atari stock has been up and down like a roller coaster the past few years, rising from a cold basement of 1/2 to a red-hot 12 after the Jaguar's release, and back down to 1-1/2. At press time ATC stock is on the rise again, sitting currently at 3-1/2, up two points in as many weeks. I can only speculate that this will rise again at the time of the actual merger.

It's all speculation. Indeed, I've never joined in the chanting of "Atari is Dead!" I can only guess what the future holds for Atari and users of its products. The usefulness of Atari's existing machines will never change. Will I ever see a new computer from Atari? Does it actually matter if I do? I may yet get a Falcon; they're very nice machines indeed. What Atari doesn't make in terms of new hardware, companies such as C-Lab, TOAD, System Solutions, Computer Direct, and many others do.

Come what may, the Atari/JTS merger can mean only good things in the long run. We may yet hook up a JTS-made drive to our Atari machines. We may be enjoying new games for the Jaguar for some time to come. Sheer speculation of course, but then again, I didn't feel that a call to the Psychic Friends Network would help. For now, let's just ride this out and see where it takes us. The Company That Just Wouldn't Quit may change forms, change names, and may even go through staff like underwear, but it hasn't quit yet and doesn't look like it's ready to throw in the towel any time soon. ▲

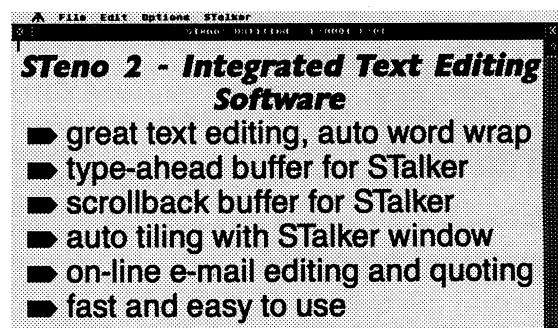
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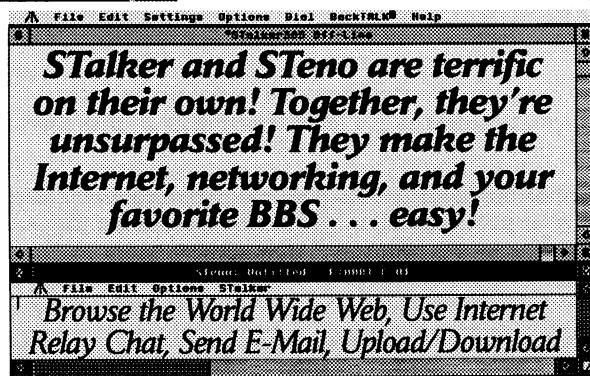
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Total FAT clusters	18497	Bad File Endings	8
FAT File Starts	3151	Invalid FAT clusters	8
FAT File Ends	3151	Chain collisions	8
Contiguous Clusters	13812		
Non-contiguous Clusters	56		
Total Files	3157	Orphan Files	8
Total File Clusters	16219	Orphan Descendants	8
Free Clusters	2277	Orphan Clusters	8
Recoverable Clusters	8		
Unuseable Clusters	8	Total Errors	8
Unknown Clusters	8	Total Good Files	3157
Status display for Volume J			
<input type="button" value="Continue"/>		<input type="button" value="Print"/>	

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COLOR CORRECTION IN ONE EASY LESSON?

Color correction: it's a term which has never been really clear to me, although over the years I've learned a couple of definitions; pieces of the puzzle. At present there are two Atari programs which have powerful color correction capabilities: Calamus SL where the ability to correct, print and export color images is available (with almost no documentation!?) and yet is extremely powerful, and Das Repro CD which has extensive color correction capabilities, both powerful and as easy to use as anything else on the market. Indeed Das Repro directly supports ALL the computer color correction schemes. In addition there are DAs Picture and the newest version of DAs Layout, where color correction comes as an option almost as expensive as the programs themselves. Photoline (just released in North America by HOMA Systems House and Computer Direct) comes with color correction capabilities.

LESSON NUMBER ONE

Color images displayed on your monitor are shown in Red, Green and Blue (RGB). These are the primary colors on a monitor (or television). From various mixes of RGB, the entire spectrum can be produced. When images are printed, Cyan, Yellow, Magenta and Black (CYMK) are used as primary colors. This is not what I learned in school. In my first and last year as a professional graphics student (back in the second grade!), I thought there was only one primary color, brown. This is what I got when I mixed all the other colors together. CYM provides a very dark brown (which is almost black).

WHY ARE PRIMARY COLORS DIFFERENT FOR DISPLAYED AND PRINTED MEDIA?

A monitor creates colors by overlapping the red, green & blue pixels. Unlike the printed page where we see color via light reflecting from a surface, on a monitor light shines through the displayed pixels (it's transmitted to the eye rather than reflected). When there is no overlap we see pure colors. Where overlapping occurs, the individual pixels act as filters. Filtering in combination with a dither pattern, produces color. Now we have a bit of a problem here. How is it possible to translate the primary colors of RGB produced by filtered transmission, onto paper, where CYMK color is produced by dithering and reflection? It is this conversion process which provides one definition of color correction. Quite a few programs (including TOS/GEM programs like ImageCopy or GEMView) use automatic color correction routines when printing. The file remains unchanged however.

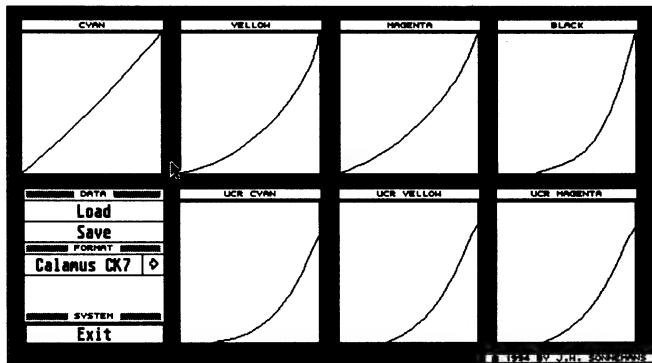
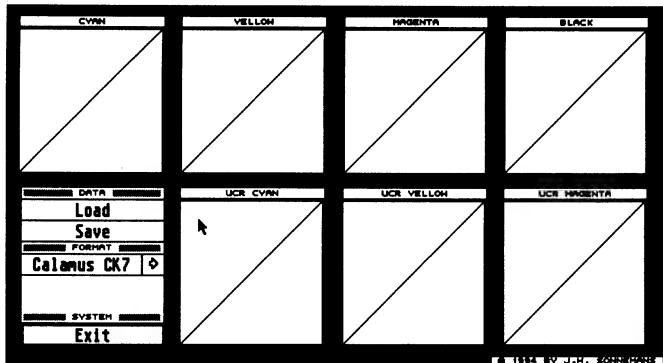
You want color?
Barkin has color!
You want curves?
Barkin has
curves!
RGB? CYMK?
Barkin tells all . . .

LESSON NUMBER TWO

How is yellow produced with RGB? With CYMK we just activate Y and presto, we are printing in yellow. In RGB mode we have to combine red & green to get yellow. Adding red & blue produces cyan. The same is true of the entire color spectrum. When a program like ImageCopy prints a file, it runs a little algorithm for your particular printer, and makes a decent judgement about how to print the image. Printing an RGB file is a more singular challenge. If the image is sent to a service bureau for further work or printing, they will either print it out (and believe me things won't look right) or they will charge you for color correction. Color correction means two notably different (though still related) things. First there is plain, universal color correction of the image; once done the image can be handed to someone else and the correct colors will be printed. Second, there is correction for individual printers. This correction is often necessary because every printer uses ink in slightly different ways, and because all inks are not created equal; there are different levels of tint, intensity, hue, opacity. It is the combination of these two processes which is really what is meant by color correction. You must remember that with a great deal of effort it's possible for you to accurately print an RGB image on YOUR printer. The file will remain useless to anyone else unfortunately (at least insofar as color accuracy is concerned). To correct the image so that it can be exported and keep its color changes it has to be corrected, converted and exported as a CYMK image.

SO HOW DO YOU TURN AN RGB INTO A CYMK?

An RGB image, no matter what you do in the way of manipulating its intensity,



Pictured are the UCR Control Lines as shown in the optional All Curve Program/Accessory. I believe this program sells for \$25 US from MGI Software and will facilitate creating CK7 control lines. The first example is the default, with all lines set at neutral. The second is a snapshot of a GCR control line, which while by no means perfect, will produce decent results. Since just eyeballing the image will make life more difficult than it should be, below is a table listing the control line points in X and Y coordinates. These are listed from left to right (bottom to top). Don't feel this represents some official pronouncement. This is a very difficult dialog without a single, correct solution.

	X/Y	X/Y	X/Y	X/Y
Cyan Linearity	0/0	31/26	65/58	100/100
Yellow Linearity	0/0	54/8	96/66	100/100
Magenta Linearity	0/0	49/17	86/59	100/100
Black Linearity	20/0	56/10	75/5	100/100
UCR Cyan	25/0	79/4	92/62	100/76
UCR Yellow	35/0	76/12	96/72	100/83
UCR Magenta	34/0	76/13	91/71	100/80

remains an RGB image. Load it into someone else's computer attached to another type of printer and the entire conversion process has to be redone, more or less from scratch. But if the image is color corrected as a CYMK file, then it can be exported and handed to anyone, though they'll still have to tweak the image a bit for their specific equipment. When correcting or converting RGB to CYMK, depending on the individual

program, we use control lines or typed-in percentage changes. The control lines assume you're in the process of correcting (or separating) the image. They should not be confused with the RGB (or CYMK) linearity (graduation, contrast & brightness) controls. Those lines are there for your gratification and no one else's. After all the final physical printing process is done in CYMK. Once an image has been corrected and converted to CYMK, you

cannot reconvert the image to RGB and retain the correction data.

LESSON NUMBER THREE

There are problems beyond what I've just described. For one thing when you combine low amounts of CYM you get various shades from grey to black. How do we control this process so that these shades don't occur randomly? If it's done wrong, we print our image and discover the people are green and the trees are a greyish orange. We then turn to other more pleasurable pursuits, like cleaning up after the dog or plucking live chickens. If on the other hand, we are successful at this process, we save the file. Grey is grey and green is green. We save the image as a 32 bit CYMK file. Once an image is corrected, color separation becomes second nature. You or your service bureau can print the four plates representing CYMK with some degree of assurance that the final printing and combining of these four color plates will accurately reproduce what you've seen on your monitor. In fact the last step in this process is to go to your Service Bureau with a test file to see how their specific printer handles your files.

Learning color correction is not the easiest task in the world. No method of color printing and therefore no method of color separation, is perfect. Problems exist to be solved however!

COLOR CORRECTION 101!

UCR (also called Chromatic Separation), stands for Under Color Removal. CYM when combined, form black. But it's a poor black with little contrasting ability. We remove a portion of this undercolor (CYM) and substitute a certain amount of real black, though not so much that low levels of grey can't still be formed by combining CYM. Black is added or substituted to heighten contrast. In Calamus SL there is a dialog for the creation of CK7 files. These files are the actual color control lines which, once embedded in an image, will correct the image for conversion to CYMK. This dialog in the Color Separation Module is called UCR. In fact it's not. It is possible to do under color removal in SL using this dialog, but I'm having a great deal of difficulty doing it. I have found however that the UCR dialogue in SL allows the creation of GCR files.

GCR (also called Achromatic Replacement), stands for Grey Component Replacement. In GCR we add or substitute black for a much larger amount of CYM black. Keep in mind that pure black has a very low intensity. This is why I say 'add' or 'substitute' instead of just 'replace'. The primary difference between the results of the two methods is that the resulting black plate (remember this is all relevant to color separation) is very weak with UCR correction and very strong with GCR

correction (depending on the strength of the GCR line).

LESSON NUMBER FOUR

What does it all mean in the real world? UCR uses a great deal more ink than GCR: a much larger portion of the image is assigned four colors, which means four layers of ink. This may not matter on a personal printer, but if files are created for press output it may matter a great deal because the use of heavy amounts of ink lead to problems with Trapping. GCR files use much less ink and in large portions of an image, fewer colors are used. It is possible to push GCR lines to the point where one of the CYM colors is completely eliminated from Black. This will result in the use of even less ink. What is the final destination of your file? What kind of paper will be used? Answer the questions and make a decision about which method of correction to use.

Trapping is another word in the color output world which has more than one meaning. Trapping refers to the way ink registers on paper and on top of other ink. How one color co-operates (Traps) with an adjacent color (or another color on top of it), is affected by the amount of ink, the press, the accuracy of individual plates, and the type of color correction used. In another context, Trapping refers to printing pure colors surrounded by different pure colors and making sure that the separation between them is sharp and clear.

There are other methods of color correction for specialty purposes. Skeleton Black is a technique where none of the CYM Black is removed and real black is simply poured on top of the very darkest part of the image. In any case, a properly corrected color image is a pleasure to print.

Calamus SL, aside from its color correcting capability, has another overpowering advantage over any other software, represented by the Star Screening Module. Star Screening a color image results in incredible, rich, consistent, moire free images that are beyond belief or description. Any decent CK7 will produce outstanding images that will make any user look like they know what they're doing, AS LONG AS THEY START WITH A CORRECTED IMAGE!

HOW TO USE THE UCR DIALOGUE OF CALAMUS SL

Calamus has two primary ways of color correcting images: the Color Separation Module and the CK7 Control lines which it creates. Unknown to most users, once the Color Separation Module is loaded, a default CK7 is automatically assigned to each and every frame you create or import. This includes text, raster, vector, whatever. This default CK7 is the ultimate GCR Line. All the CYM grey has

been deleted from the frame. You can check this by creating a grey RGB raster frame, get into the dialogue and delete Linear Black by moving the horizontal line to the bottom of the frame. When you try to print, nothing happens. Restore the black line and your object will print.

In the default position the UCR control lines are set to neutral. Neutral means NO CYM BLACK. You can move the color linearity lines any way you want as long as the UCR lines are in neutral there will be no CYM black. Yet there is plenty of color. Colors and colored objects will still print. They don't print too well however, because some CYM black is necessary for most jobs. As the UCR lines are lowered, some of the colors are pulled into CYM black. This is where confusion sometimes arises. Let's say you increase the amount of cyan (blue) pulled into black by lowering the cyan UCR line. Suddenly the image you're working on takes on a dramatic blue cast. What happened? It's true that you pulled cyan into black, but what about the rest of the colors? If a corresponding amount of magenta and yellow are not pulled into black, the cyan will register as cyan and not CYM black.

It is at this point that many users throw up their hands in defeat. Without knowledge of the process, the outcome is too unpredictable. To compound the matter, increasing the cyan using the linearity module will increase the amount of cyan in CYM black, as well as increasing the amount of cyan overall. There is a complete lack of documentation about these controls and modules which many Calamus users find very frustrating.

It should be noted that the CK7 lines exist for the purpose of color correcting the image, not color correcting for the individual printer. You can correct an image for your printer with these lines, but the image won't be fully corrected for anyone else's printer. It's another reason for practice trips to your Service Bureau.

There's another point to be taken into consideration. Load a color image into SL and without altering the CK7 in any way use the Bridge module to convert the image to CYMK. You will then notice that the image looks identical in RGB and CYMK. Now take your original RGB image and alter the UCR lines; make some really dramatic changes. Convert it to CYMK again, and the conversion will also appear dramatically different. The effect of adding a CYM black plate, even a partial one, shows up after the conversion. Unfortunately what you see after the conversion is not what will print. This is because you have altered the image almost at random. At the point where you have created a consistent CYM plate and you're not trying to eliminate true black from your image, what you see will be what you print (more or less). You will now need to tweak your new CYMK image with the linearity controls in the Frame module; remove a little black, add a little cyan,

whatever. This last operation corrects the colors for your printer. The CK7 no longer has any effect. If you import a CYMK image from another program, the CK7 line won't do anything. Remember also that while the CK7 line has a profound effect on your image, the effect is not visible until the image is printed. The exception to this is that converting to CYMK shows the effects of your CK7.

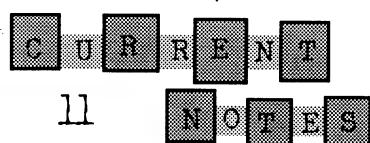
The second method of color correction Calamus SL provides is the Linearity Module (not to be confused with the built in frame linearity controls of SL). These controls use lines labeled CK3 if the image is RGB, and CK4 if the image is CYMK. The Linearity Module however, is some sort of hybrid and I'm still not sure exactly how to make use of it. A number of warnings are in order however. Once the Linearity Module is loaded it also becomes the default for every frame in your document. Indeed, even if deleted it still affects EVERY FRAME! The only way to eliminate its effects is by leaving the program and restarting Calamus. Its actions are not visible until it's time to print your image. In other words it can be a profoundly disturbing and uncontrollable influence if you have created a CK7 line. My preliminary advice is that if you make use of the Linearity Module, don't touch the default settings of the Color Separation Module.

At any rate, I hope this gives you a head start on Color Correction with Calamus. The next article in this series will deal with Das Repro CD and its color correction capabilities. Among other things the superb Das Repro demands that you first color co-ordinate your monitor with your printed output. It makes life much simpler and only takes 20 minutes. However before I resume this series I intend to give a roundup of the many powerful Atari vector programs and where they fit into the world of computing. ▲

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the big city byte

by *howard carson*



The shock was thorough and sudden. A nine year old was 'playing' on the main computer in the office. A demo copy of Apex Media was up and running, and the nine year old was drawing away, happily creating a planet covered in oceans, cities, greenery and artillery(?). Icons were clicked, pens were resized, colors chosen, and shapes were drawn and filled. The monitor was quickly filled with a riot of colors and shapes.

The shock came when the nine year old wanted to save his creation.

"Sorry Gregory," came the terrible answer, "you can't save your picture. This is only a demo of the program. Saving doesn't work."

You should have seen the look on his face.

A few days later, the same thing happened with Pixart. This time the boy was using a registered copy of the software and saving worked just fine.

A week after the Pixart session, young Gregory had a look at Corel Draw 3 and 5. Unfortunately, no magical works of art emerged from the encounter. The software was completely opaque to him, difficult to use and understand; massive power burdened with byzantine detail and an arcane design paradigm.

One tool cannot be all things to all users. Gregory's computer illiterate mother called the other week.

"I'm stuck. I need some help," she pleaded. "I need to get some lab studies written up and the University library doesn't open until noon on Saturdays! I thought I could use one of the computers, but the doors won't be open for two more hours. Can I come over and use your computer?"

"Sure, why not."

She arrived burdened with notes and textbooks. Edith Professional was launched and Mom began typing away.

"Um, I need some help here," she said after a couple minutes. "Is there any way I can put a square root sign in this formula?"

"Sure. Just hold down the ALT key, hit 2-5-1 on the numeric keypad, then release the ALT key. The square root sign will appear at the cursor."

"Cool!" she exclaimed, after trying the technique. "What about the squared and cubed superscripts?"

"Um, that's easy too. Check the ASCII table in the drop down menu. Find what you're looking for and just click on it. It'll show up at the cursor too."

"Great," she said, "but what about some fancy fonts and things? Can I do that too?"

"Sure. When you're done with your writing and you're sure it's where you want it to be, we can load it into Atari Works and dress it up a little."

Unfortunately, a few days later she needed to do some sort of typing at the university library again. The immensely powerful Wordperfect 6 was dragooned into service however, and things didn't go quite as smoothly as the Edith Professional session. Unintuitive is unintuitive.

One tool can't be all things to all users. Toolmakers have been trying for a couple of generations to create all-in-one solutions to myriad related problems. None of the solutions have worked particularly well. The so-called Swiss Army Knife is an example of something that can substitute for a wide variety of specific tools, but none of the knife's features is truly outstanding on its own. Corel Draw and Papyrus and Microsoft

Word and Wordperfect purport to be all things to all people, but the only package that encourages any significant degree of intuitive use is Papyrus.

Boo, hiss! We need more than that. TOS/GEM software design paradigms must be applied to all new software which is being programmed for other platforms. It would be more of an outrageous statement only if well established TOS/GEM design standards weren't so darn good.

Even if we can only agree that form and function are inextricably intertwined (that form can generate logical functions and vice versa), then it is sensible to demand that something more than that which is extant must exude from the major software developers. It is certain that current standards cannot be maintained for too much longer. It is also certain that some eerie thoughts have begun to surge through contemporary consciousness; specifically, "when will there come time when the tool we purchase to execute a particular task actually executes that task with demonstrable efficiency, without being burdened by a wealth of extraneous features that serve more to obliterate the original need than support it?"

The answer is (apparently): "none too soon!"

Having to spend large sums of cash for bloated software, we may often feel that the need for any supporting software is outrageous. I pity the salesperson who must face an irritated consumer who is screaming, "I paid BIG BUCKS for this piece of crap! It's supposed to do everything! But the only citizen who can figure it all out is the geek who programmed it in the first place!"

Echo Lake, Multimedia Suites, Works packages, Corel Draw, Quark XPress, Windows 95, OS/2 Warp, and a whole long list of massive, bloated, codesick software is lurking in the dark shadows of Advertising Land, waiting to pounce on the next victim. Operating systems which require all the space available on 22 high density floppy disks are just as ridiculous.

One tool cannot be all things to all users.

The software that needs to be good at several different tasks often fails to live up to expectations. Windows-oriented Personal Information Managers are ex-

ceedingly powerful for example, but a corollary effect of that power generally makes them slow to use; slower in fact than a plain old pen and paper Day-timer. So much software which attempts to meet every conceivable need (no matter how obscure), fails most of the tests which are used to determine intuitiveness and efficiency (except in a few specific areas). This fact would seem to indicate that in many situations, two specialized apps (or three, or four), might be far more effective and intuitive (and therefore easier to learn and use), for the task at hand.

One tool cannot be all things to all users. Listen to Gregory and his older brother Matthew. They discard software which can't be used immediately upon loading. They read extremely well and refer to manuals whenever there is a problem. But if a piece of software requires several hours of reading before its basic functions can be accessed, it will wind up in the garbage. You can't blame them. Cryptic tutorials and barbaric manuals don't help the situation either.

A quick poll of home computer users reveals an inordinate amount of expensive Windows software sitting on shelves, collecting dust. Efficacious standards of performance do not exist in the software industry. Ethical standards of performance do not exist in the industry. The industry and consumer advocacy in general, have not defined reliable standards; no one has explained that a graphical interface is not, by definition, intuitive! The creation of genuinely useful Instruction Manuals appears to be a lost art, at the same time as product support is becoming vastly more expensive to obtain.

Consumers have been universally dazzled by the modern computing movement and its pervasiveness. Advertisers' continuous claims about the power and dynamism designed into their products, has confused or distracted us to the point where we've become willing to accept performance standards which we'd find outrageous in any other milieu. Most software and hardware setups are reminiscent of nothing so much as a Toaster supplied with a hidden on/off switch, and an instruction sheet which fails to reveal the hiding place. Such a toaster would last all of 24 hours in the marketplace. PC software which emulates this needlessly complex design paradigm is routinely accepted however.

A serious Electrician will tell you that a pair of fine quality diagonal cutters, a

pair of fine quality lineman's pliers, a pair of fine quality wire strippers, and a fine set of screwdrivers and allen keys, are vastly superior to any all-in-one tools; far more reliable, far more versatile, and far more long lasting. Bulky multi-tools containing utensils which are awkward to implement, resemble nothing so much as the first all-in-one Hi-Fi's of days gone by. Those entertainment systems(!) contained turntables which rarely maintained proper speed, tuners which had massive problems with even the most powerful broadcasts, cassette players which ate tape, and televisions with absurdly fragile tuning knobs. Many of the latest, massive software applications resemble those antedated products, although most modern software sure does look a lot prettier.

The implementation of a single-purpose software tool for the completion of a task (or part of a task) is invariably the most efficient way to achieve success. Implementing other specialized software tools to complete more complex tasks provides the most intimate familiarity with the tasks and the software. Such an approach

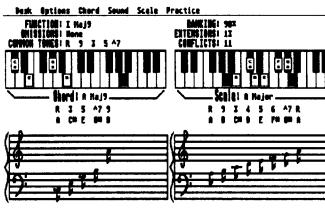
also provides the best chance of producing professional results.

One tool can't be all things to all users. Amen.

There are veritable racks full of terrific software available for TOS/GEM, Amiga, Windows and Mac. The most massive applications which purport to be cure-alls, usually do contain the programming code needed to answer their most severe critics and skeptics. Unfortunately, such applications frequently sacrifice usability for immense power. And such power must contain (by definition) immensely complex interfaces. *Caveat Emptor*, because all that glitters is not gold. A smart carpenter never uses a pneumatic hammer to drive finishing nails into delicate moulding. A smart mechanic never uses an air wrench on Grandma's antique tea cart. Take the hint.:

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PIANISTICS



Pianistics is an innovative piano instruction program for all levels of students, as well as for seasoned professionals. It was designed as a tool to help keyboardists learn chords and scales in all keys and to give insight into the concepts of scale improvisation and chord substitution. Pianistics is an easy to use GEM application for the Atari ST that takes advantage of the many features of the computer. Practice scales and arpeggios are output through MIDI as well as the internal sound chip thus assisting the player in developing a technical mastery of scales and arpeggios.



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MEANWHILE... BACK IN GOOD OLD SUNNYVALE...

A lot of things have been going on in the last couple of months!

TED HOFF GONE: Ted Hoff, the ex-Sega executive became Atari's president of North American Operations last year. He was considered the go-getter that could change the company's fortunes in the games machine market. But he has abruptly resigned his post and become the latest of many North American executives who became victims of Atari's revolving door, though not before making a brave attempt to actually market the Jaguar system. Despite reports to the contrary (including rumours that Atari Corp was about to bail on the Jaguar), Mr. Hoff gave no reason for his resignation. Taking over as new president is (surprise!) Jack Tramiel, majority shareholder of the company. So what does Jack do first...

ATARI/JTS MERGER: Atari Corporation has agreed to a business merger with JTS Corporation, a maker of computer disk drives. Under the agreement, Atari will purchase \$80 million in JTS stock, including \$25 million worth of bridge financing (which, if the deal is not approved, will be converted to JTS shares), to acquire JTS. The merged company will be known as JTS Corporation, with JTS'

drive business and Atari's game business operating as separate divisions within the company, and will be run by JTS officers, with Jack Tramiel becoming a member of the board of directors. The merger is to be finalized by the end of the second calendar quarter of 1996. It is hoped that JTS will be provided with enough investment capital to become a major provider of disk drives for desktop and portable computers, and expect to ship 2 million drives this year.

WHITHER JAGUAR? Atari has done a lot in the last number of months to promote the Jaguar home game system, including the release of the Jag-CD CD-ROM peripheral, a price drop in the base Jaguar system to US\$99 over the Christmas season, additional price drops on a number of Jaguar games cartridges, and a virtual blizzard of new game releases (including releases of BATTLEMORPH, BLUE LIGHTNING CD, HIGHLANDER, BALDIES, DEFENDER 2000, MYST CD, MISSILE COMMAND 2000, etc.). But there is concern that Atari is considering leaving the very competitive game business. Although August Liguori, Atari's chief financial officer, has stated that the company is committed to support the Jaguar through 1996, according to the San Francisco Chronicle in their February 14th

1996 edition, officials at Atari state that they will continue to sell the system and its games until its current stocks are depleted, and then a decision will be made about whether to continue in the games business. Here we go again.

GENIE SOLD: GENie, the US-based online service has been tentatively sold by its parent company, GE Information Services Inc., to Yovelle Renaissance Corporation, based in Queens, NY. For Atari users, GENie is one of the online services of choice, due to its large file resources, non computer specific interface, and topic areas of vast interest, including areas for 8-bit, ST/TT/Falcon, and Jaguar users.

KILLING IMPACT GAME NOW AVAILABLE: Crawly Crypt Corporation has become the North American agents for the new Falcon030 game Killing Impact, an incredibly detailed and smooth playing horizontal scroller. Imagine the classic arcade game JOUST played over a larger field and with tougher monsters trying to unseat you from your vehicle, accompanied by a digital soundtrack. It runs on both RGB and VGA monitors, and can utilize the keyboard, joystick, or Jaguar Power Pad. Suggested retail US\$44.99. Available from your local Atari dealer or from Crawly Crypt Corporation,

PO Box 23, Webb City, MO, 64870-0023,
United States.

ATARI COMPENDIUM ON CD-ROM:

SDS Publishing's comprehensive programming reference for the Atari/TOS line of computers has now been released in CD-ROM format. Set up in HTML (the standard used in World Wide Web document writing), browsing through the vast source of knowledge is a snap utilizing the CAB/WWW reader (which is included in its entirety on the disk along with STiK). It is also possible to read it on a PC with a program like Netscape. Related files, examples, and programming utilities have been included for the programmer to try out what's described. Suggested retail price \$29.95 US, available from your local Atari dealer. TOAD Computers has produced the CD, and done a superb job. Call TOAD at 1-800-448-8623.

ANOTHER HOMA CD-ROM DRIVER:

Homa Systems House, the Ottawa-based

software house responsible for the ATARI CD MASTER line of driver software for popular PC CD-ROM titles like TOTAL BODY, UFO, and TIME ALMANAC, has introduced another driver. This one is for the recently released INFOpedia V2.0, which consists of all 29 volumes of Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (complete with almost 27,000 entries and 8,000 photo and sound clips), the Hammond World Atlas, the 1995 Almanac and Book of Facts, and much more. Requires an Atari with 4 megabytes RAM, 3 megabytes of hard drive space and a monitor of at least 640x400 resolution. TTs and Falcons capable of 256 colour displays are the recommended systems. Available by itself for \$48.95, or bundled with the Infopedia for \$118.95. HOMA SYSTEMS HOUSE, P.O.BOX 52127, OTTAWA, ON K1N 5S0; TEL: (613)722-0901; FAX: (613)722-9061.

NEW VERSION OF EXTENDOS PRO:

Roger Burrows, the programmer of EXTENDOS PRO, the only Atari/TOS

CD-ROM driver software that matters (that's my humble opinion, folks!), has announced the release of version 2.3. The new driver will feature the following:

- direct audioCD-to-disk recording (requires compliant hardware)
- MIDI_COM support: CD-ROM drives installed by ExtenDOS Pro are now accessible across a MIDI_COM connection
- improved automatic support for photoCD and audio CD on drives unknown to ExtenDOS Pro
- support for single-session photoCD on the popular NEC25 drive

The software is listed at suggested retail price of \$39.95 from your local Atari dealer, or directly from Anodyne Software, 6 Cobbler Court, Ottawa, Ontario, K1V 0B8, Canada. Existing users of EXTENDOS PRO will be able to upgrade via a free software patch available via the major online services and ftp sites; users of the original EXTENDOS driver will be able to upgrade by sending the original diskette and \$20 to the above address.

Great Company, Great Products! Positive Image from Floppyshop

upwards, and supports all ST, TT, and Falcon screen resolutions. Amongst its many features:

- editing of 24-bit TrueColour images
- powerful block handling, including the choice of 11 different overlay methods with variable transparency
- supports the creation of 3D "random dot", and foreground enhanced, stereograms
- uses the Falcon's DSP for processor intensive tasks and JPEG decoding
- images can be rescaled up to more than 400% of original size without noticeable loss of quality
- images can be spooled to disk if memory is low, then printed directly from the GEM desktop

Available from your local Atari dealer, or from FloppyShop for £79 plus £10 postage and packing. PO Box 273, Aberdeen, Scotland, AB9 8SJ; Credit card line telephone/fax no 01224 586208. The North American distributor for Positive Image is Computer Direct in Edmonton, Canada. Company President Chris Krowchuk is wild about this superb image processing app, and will supply Positive Image to every Atari dealer in North America.

POSITIVE IMAGE: FloppyShop, the Scotland-based public domain library that also dabbles in commercial Atari titles, has announced the release of Positive Image, a 24-bit image processing and retouching package that can run on anything from a 1 megabyte ST

For those of you who give a darn about such things . . .

... products submitted for review to Current Notes go through a variety of hands. The testing crew consists of 16/32/64 Editor Eric March, Copy Editor Lianne Reitter, Electronic Technician Steven Burris, and Editor Jack Reikel. Certain products are tested by individual Editors and Contributors too, and all subjective data in any review is examined carefully for accuracy. 'alt.info.everything' Editor Dan Dreibelbis dabbles as a product tester from time to time, and frequently provides insights which make the rest of us jealous! Contributor Steven Demetrius has gone as far as developing his PEX'y product rating system (PEX'y stands for Product/Program Expectations). David Barkin reviews things as he sees fit, and since he's liable to sick the dog on us if we interfere, we let David do as he pleases (he hasn't disappointed us yet!). Publisher Robert Boardman and Managing Editor Howard 'The Boss' Carson complain long and loud about not getting enough testing time.

DAN'S LIST OF COOL WEB SITES!

JAGUAR PAGE

(<http://zeus.atcon.com/jagwire/menu.html>): the official Atari website on everything you need to know about the Jaguar, including hardware, software, and press announcements.

MGI (<http://www.mgisoft.com>): website for MGI, the new home of Calamus software (say hi to Nathan!)

URBAN LEGENDS (<http://www2.best.com/~debunk/>): the best place to find out if all those stories you've heard from your favorite FOAF (friend of a friend) about microwaved poodles, vanishing hitchhikers, batter-fried rats, alligators in the sewers, and the legend of the Hookman are true.

SHAREWARE (<http://www.shareware.com>): a search site for finding all sorts of shareware for all platforms on the internet, including a page dedicated to Atari software.

STAR TREK: VOYAGER

(<http://paramount.com/VoyagerIntro.html>): the official Paramount site for the latest incarnation of Star Trek. Very well designed, and updated regularly with the latest info on each week's episode!

SING ALONG WITH JAMES T. KIRK!

(<http://www.ama.caltech.edu/users/mrm/kirk.html>): a home page dedicated to the dubious singing talents of William Shatner, on his camp, classic album THE TRANSFORMED MAN, recently reissued on CD. You haven't lived until you've heard his impassioned versions of "Lucy In the Sky With Diamonds" and "It Was a Very Good Year".

LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN

(<http://www.cbs.com:80/lateshow/lateshow.html>): the official home page of that CBS talkshow weasel, complete with an archive of his Top Ten Lists. Also includes links to Tom Snyder's Late Late Show and Calvert DeForest's ultra-cool web site.

NIZKOR (<http://nizkor.almanac.bc.ca>): a site dedicated to the collection and documenting of the facts that the Nazi Holocaust DID happen. Its creator is a very dedicated and tireless individual; this is one very big site.

DAVE BARRY HOME PAGE

(<http://www.sjmercury.com/living/dbarry/>): I am not making this up. It's the official page for the popular humorous newspaper columnist & writer.

STRAWBERRY POP-TART BLOWTORCHES

(<http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~pmichaud/toast/>): this is a page dedicated to a scientific experiment that was inspired by Dave Barry's column about how Strawberry Pop-Tarts can become a deadly offensive weapon if left in the toaster for too long. Done up like a scientific report, complete with actual photos of the experiment in progress. Very funny stuff. KIDS! DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

SHERRI'S QUEEN PAGE

(<http://rt66.com/unicorn/queen.html>): fans of the

incredible rock group Queen will enjoy this very well-designed and informative page.

APPLE (<http://www.apple.com>): honest, I was only looking here to find out what system would be best to run MagicMac on! An interesting page with an interesting interface. Includes other Mac links.

ADRIAN LEGG

(<http://macman.eng.clemson.edu/legghead.html>): fans of the enigmatic acoustic guitar wizard will want to check out this page, which gives news on his current releases and tour dates. Apparently the man is also very net savvy.

RHINO RECORDS

(<http://cybertimes.com/Rhino/Welcome.html>): this is an incredible record label that specializes in re-releases and anthologies of classic rock music and camp classic videos. The web site is just as classy.

THE BORG HOMEPAGE

(<http://www.tamnet.interbusiness.it/htmlpages/adds/borgpage/fastborg.htm>): the home of the Federation's greatest threat, the machine-race that is dedicated to assimilating everyone through cybernetic implants linking everyone to a single collective. No, not Microsoft! Includes news on the upcoming eighth STAR TREK film, RESURRECTION, in which the Borg are prominently featured. Got news? Concerns? Announcements? Send them to me at my new e-mail address: dreibel@io.org. And remember: "The best time to go to Disney World, to avoid crowds, is 1962" - Dave Barry, from DAVE BARRY'S ONLY TRAVEL GUIDE YOU'LL EVER NEED.▲



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GIZMO: n. [Slang] any gadget or contrivance

*That's how Webster's New Twentieth Dictionary defines Gizmo. chro_Magic Software Innovations however, defines Gizmo as any *useful* gadget or contrivance. It's the word 'useful' which provides the greatest distinction.*

chro_Magic Software sells a couple of different Gizmos, with the Keyboard Gizmo and the Falcon RAM Gizmo being the best known. Our primary interest for this review is the Keyboard Gizmo. We're going to devote more than the usual amount of review space dedicated to this thing; it deals with the principle data input device connected to your computer, after all.

There is a fine, busy market in keyboard replacement hardware designed specifically for the ST, STe, TT and Falcon. A selection can be made from among the Z-Keys adaptor, the D.E.K.A., Freekeys, and the chro_Magic Keyboard Gizmo. The reason for the existence of all these adaptors is simply the fact that the ST, STe, TT and Falcon keyboards are merely serviceable. They don't compare well (in terms of response and feel) to their older, more mature siblings: Olivetti, Selectric, Keytronics, Microsoft and so on. The Mega ST keyboard is the exception. In fact, the old Mega ST keyboard is one of the best available for any platform. For most people however, the problem has always been, "how do I hook one of those fancy PC keyboards to my Atari?" Keyboard adaptors were developed to answer the question. The Keyboard Gizmo is a particularly successful example of the genre.

THE BASICS

The Keyboard Gizmo is not your typical black (or grey) box. It was designed primarily as an aid to those people interested in mounting their

Bill Johnstone is playing with his Gizmo! Bill's gotten hold of chro_Magic's Keyboard Gizmo

computers in a tower case. As a result, opening the package in which the Gizmo is supplied can be a bit of a let down; the device consists of a thick circuit board (containing a couple of chips), and multi-way ribbon cable securely attached to the board. The ribbon cable is terminated with several D-connectors, a round PC keyboard connector and a special plug which fits the internal Atari keyboard port, located on the ST/STe/Falcon motherboard.

The D-connectors provide attachments for an Atari mouse, a PC serial mouse, and a couple of joysticks. The ribbon cable to which all of the connectors are attached is not meant to be left lying unprotected on a desk (there is no standard ribbon cable which is designed to stand up to any type of physical wear-n-tear). If you decide to use the Keyboard Gizmo 'as is', cover or wrap the ribbon cable with something that will adequately protect the thing; corrugated, automotive cable wrap is a good choice.

INSTALLING THE GIZMO

We tried the Keyboard Gizmo in a tower case, a standard Hammond box (with appropriate holes punched), as well as leaving it lying around on desktops. We used a variety of serial and TOS mice, half a dozen different joysticks, and 9 different PC XT & AT keyboards.

We learned quickly that staying away from cheapo AT keyboards is a smart thing to do. After all, if you're going to replace the Atari keyboard, you might as well do so with something better. We also discovered that there are a lot of lousy keyboards out there! We dubbed them 'IMPCRAP' (Injection Molded Plastic Crap). During keyboard buffer testing, we actually broke a couple of the lousiest ones. Basically, it seems advisable to stay away from the \$19.95 specials. We didn't find anything provably worthwhile for less than about \$50.

We used rubber spacers and #6 machine screws/nuts to mount the Gizmo in the tower case. The ribbon

cables were more than long enough to reach the rear panel of the tower and the keyboard port on the Falcon motherboard. We used two unused port slots at the rear of the case to mount the connectors. The initial mounting process required us to remove a few knock-outs on the rear plate of the tower case, and fasten the D-connectors securely with 3/8", #4 machine screws and nuts. The Gizmo requires no external power for operation and is totally self-contained. It does not require any configuration software. If you've not done this sort of installation before, keep in mind that you should be working with a Medium-sized tower case, to accommodate the length of the ST/STe/Falcon motherboard.

Box mounting was also fairly straightforward (although somewhat cramped). We took the aluminum Hammond box to a nearby machine shop to have the correct size holes punched (which cost \$15 and provided a clean, smooth-edged mounting surface). If you're going to mount the Gizmo in a box, make it something bigger than the typical switchbox. The ideal size is about 6"wx6"dx3" h. Smaller boxes don't provide enough room to fold the main cable properly. Although the recommended box is a bit on the large side, the benefits provided by the Keyboard Gizmo offset the sacrifice of space. The best boxes are aluminum or plastic. We found the aluminum boxes required the least amount of fuss; they were easiest to drill, jig or file to size. Even the best plastic boxes tend to crack and split during cutting and drilling. Remember to orient the ribbon cable which extends to the keyboard port *before* you cut/drill any holes in the box. Doing so will enable the most logical placement of the other connectors (for easy mounting and external access).

There is no point in discussing the use of the Gizmo without any sort of box or case. Leaving it exposed will result in problems unless you're very, very, very, very, very careful.

There is a mounting anomaly when attaching the Gizmo to the keyboard port on the motherboard. If you don't do it carefully, it's possible to short the +5v line to the port. That can result in a blown trace, which in turn means that a competent repair person will have to run a +5v jumper to the power pin on the keyboard port in order to get your system running again. If it happens, make sure the technician puts an in-line fuse in the new power line. However, note that the

problem only occurs if you take insufficient care when fitting the motherboard connector. Never work with the computer plugged in, and make sure that pin 1 of the keyboard port is inserted in the first hole of the Gizmo connector; the Gizmo connector is naturally oriented, with the flat ribbon cable extending off the right side of the computer motherboard. If you're using a box for the Gizmo (and therefore leaving your motherboard in its original case), take the time to remove the metal RF shielding from the ST/STE/Falcon to gain a clearer view of the port pins when attaching the connector. It all works perfectly when fitted properly, but the motherboard connector could stand a little improvement (we've suggested a notch or color dot on the connector to indicate pin 1). In any event, a little care will reward you with the use of a terrific peripheral. If you're unsure about the installation call or e-mail chro_Magic! You'll find their product support to be superb.

TASTE TESTS

Keyboard pounding: we invited several people to pound away as fast as they could on a variety of keyboards, to see if the buffer could be either confused or overloaded. There was no confusion and no overload however, although we did demolish a couple of the cheaper keyboards (broken keys, punched membranes, snapped traces, and so on). The best all around keyboard we found was the Keytronics model #EO3601QL. It's an AT/XT switchable model, with excellent touch and durability. At \$40, it was definitely a 'best buy'.

As a general note, XT keyboards seem to be a little more stable. A very rare Falcon TOS bug seemed to crop up with AT keyboards: specifically, the recursive window refresh bug. What happens is that any NEWDESK.INF file that includes an open window will sometimes create a situation where TOS thinks it needs to refresh the window repeatedly, preventing anything else from being done and necessitating a reboot. We encountered the problem several times while using AT keyboards, but only once while using XT keyboards. Altogether, the bug occurred about 9 times during the course of 226 bootups while the PC keyboards were attached. None of the regular Current Notes product testers have ever definitively encountered the bug while using standard Atari keyboards.

With connectors securely mounted

in either the box or the tower, we repeatedly plugged and unplugged a motley assortment of broken joysticks, mice and keyboards. The Gizmo's connectors showed no appreciable wear after about 2,000 hits. Remember to tighten the mounting screws, or slight flexing will eventually weaken or break the solder connections which attach the ribbon cable to the connectors.

Regular use tests consisted of three different people performing a variety of intensive wordprocessing tasks over a period of three weeks. There were no problems reported. Everyone loved the fact that they could take advantage of a working CAPS LOCK indicator light on the keyboards, as well as a genuinely superb mouse acceleration routine built into the Gizmo (you can turn it off using a keyboard combination). The testers found no software conflicts, no conflicts with alternative operating environments such as Geneva, MagiC, MinT & MultiTOS, NeoDesk, Thing, no|Desk, and Ease.

It should also be noted that all of the testers have now purchased the Keyboard Gizmo, because they refused to go back to their old, Atari keyboards.

The Keyboard Gizmo is not supplied with any manual. In point of fact, it doesn't need a manual and the information sheet which is supplied instead seems perfectly adequate. Chris Richards (the Gizmo designer) is nonetheless working on some additional documentation which will provide a few more details and suggestions.

If you're a regular Flea Market browser, it will be easy to find an appropriate box for the Gizmo for less than \$2. The Keytronics keyboard recommended above, garnered high praise from everyone who used it. Look for the same model, or any equivalent from some other manufacturer. Do not bother with discount, IMPCRAP; you'll be sorry. If you

really want to save a few bucks on a keyboard, browse some of the used computer stores and see if you can find a serviceable Olivetti, Selectric, Gateway, Compaq or Microsoft model. If you really want to go all-out, I personally recommend the new Microsoft ergonomic model. Dollar for dollar however, the Keytronics scored best overall.

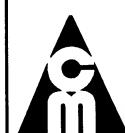
SO WHAT?

Buy it, install it, use it. The Keyboard Gizmo will ease the installation of an ST/STE/Falcon into a tower case, and improve your typing and general data input in any case. Furthermore, the use of a Gizmo on your desktop will provide you with the best of all possible worlds: a great computer with a great keyboard.▲

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So you ask: "What is Cardfile4 and what can it do for me?"

It's tough to stay organized. I'm sure you've heard of people that carry around little black books. Some people have little scraps of paper strewn everywhere. Some can even memorize the phone book! If you don't want to be one of those people, then you may want to use Cardfile4. It's versatile, accurate, and has some very useful features: among other things, Cardfile4 data can be transferred to and from the Atari Portfolio (which is also a fine little PIM).

Cardfile4 stores personal information on electronic 'cards'. On the "Xmain" side of a card you have Name, Address, etc., and on the "Xnote" side of a card you can add notes such as e-mail addresses, product names or any other appropriate information. On the "Xmain" side each entry field has a name. This name can be edited and is limited only by the size of the field. The fields, or the line numbers on the "Xnote" side, can be used to do a Search. If you wanted to search for "Steven", you would go to the bottom of Cardfile's window and use the up/down cursor key to change the line to "First name". Then you would enter "Steven" and press [RETURN]. Cardfile reports the first occurrence of the name, from the "DAT" file that's loaded. Different "DAT" files can be created, containing different types of information, eg: BUSINESS.DAT, PERSONAL.DAT, FAMILY.DAT, etc. Of course, you can use any names you want, and just load the DAT file you want to use after you've started Cardfile4. Appointments can be attached to any card or can be added independent of the cards. You can enter appointments for the current day or



Steven Demetrius
pokes away at
Gribnif's Cardfile 4!
Steven says it works
well, and since Steven
doesn't tell lies . . .

far into the future. You can have one or more appointments for the same day. Cardfile4 can be configured to prompt you about the day's appointments, each time the computer is booted. Appointments can also be printed.

Cardfile4 displays a standard calendar; a grid of numbered squares representing each day of the month. The total number of appointments for each day is shown, as well as appointments before noon and after noon. If the calendar is set to show the current month the current day will be shown in a different color. A mouse click permits forward or backward jumps, a month or a year at a time.

Cardfile4 prints labels, envelopes, address books, appointments and the calendar. Cardfile4 comes with several different printer configuration files that can be modified with a text editor, to suit personal needs.

If a modem is connected to the computer, Cardfile4 can use the modem to dial a phone number from one of the cards.

Data can be transferred from Cardfile4 to another program, such as a text editor. Transferring information to and from the Portfolio requires a special cable.

Cardfile4 is fully supported by Gribnif.

The (very tiny) Down Side Ports: Cardfile4 does not give you the option of setting the default modem port. If you have a machine with more than one serial ports and your modem is connected to a port other than modem1, you'll have to use MODEM.CPX or some terminal program to change the default port.

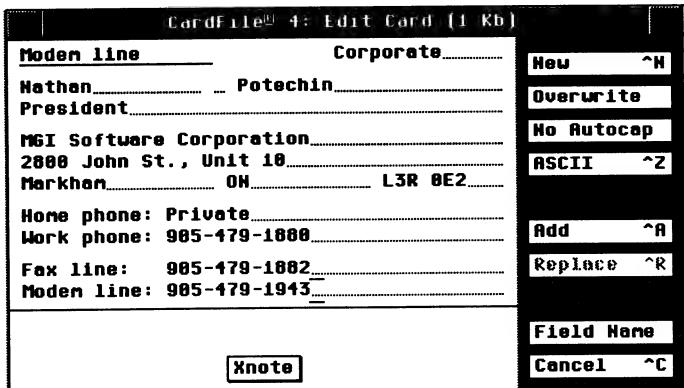
Printing envelopes on my Epson FX100 does not produce the most professional results. I have gotten around this by using another program to set my printer to 'double strike' and 'emphasis'. This can also be accomplished by editing Cardfile's FX printer configuration file.

Unfortunately I do not know those printer codes and can't seem to get them anywhere. Also when printing envelopes, addresses are not printed in the normal column format that is easy to follow. I have found that if you make postal workers' jobs as easy as possible, you have a better chance of getting mail to its destination. Example:

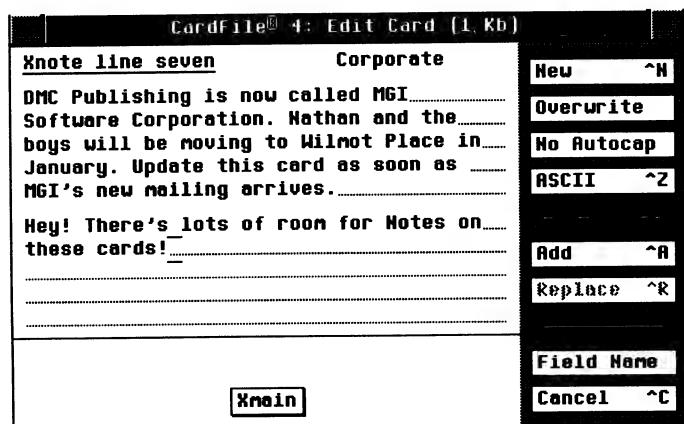
Jane Doe President Doe & Doe CO
Suite 783 - 345 Doe Street
Toronto, Ontario
DOE 8U9
Canada

Address field widths are sometimes too short. For example the State/Country field is big enough to accommodate information for Canada and the USA; you can abbreviate Province or State. In other countries this isn't possible, or you may not be sure if an abbreviation is acceptable.

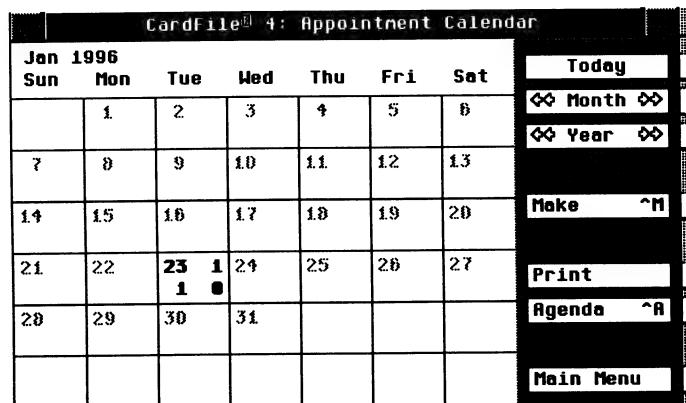
At this point in time, Cardfile4 prompts for appointments when the system is booted. It has the disadvantage, for those who leave their computer on all the time, that they may never be prompted for appointments. A configurable timer would be nice.



The 'Xmain' side of the card provides ample space for the usual information. Click on 'Xnote' to get to the other side!



The 'Xnote' side of the card can accommodate detailed reference information, including those long e-mail addresses.



The Calendar displays scheduled events properly. There is an 'Xnote' card for them as well...

In Conclusion . . .
 Cardfile4 does what it was designed to do, and does it well. It's a good PIM that will be an excellent PIM, with a few small improvements. At this point in time I would recommend Cardfile4 to any one that wants to keep track of personal information. I have looked at other programs which seem to offer more than Cardfile, but which unfortunately aren't anywhere near as stable as

Cardfile! It doesn't matter what a program promises . . . if it doesn't work, that's the bottom line!

I'm sure you're wondering what the hell PEX'y is! It's what I use to evaluate programs: Program EXpectations. All the PEX'ys can't apply to all software, but the following list is a great rule(s) of thumb.

A Good Program Should:
 1) put all its screen output in windows

- 2) give access to DA's (Desk-accessories)
- 3) allow running another program from within it
- 4) run as a PRG or ACC
- 5) provide port selection
- 6) provide printer options

(eg: print data to the printer or a file)

7) use GEM properly

- 8) have online Help
- 9) have keyboard shortcuts
- 10) have little or no illegal or undocumented coding. Anything weird should be described in the program's documentation

11) do what it's made to do, efficiently

12) have an author and/or distributor who offers user support

Enjoy Cardfile; it really is a solid, useful piece of work! Good TOS/GEM PIMs are hard to find, and this one has a lot of advantages.

Cardfile 4 is available directly from Gribnif or from Atari dealers everywhere. Call them for the latest prices on Cardfile and other Gribnif products.▲

C U R R E N T

WRITING using text editors!

a journey of 1000 words begins with the very first sentence

A good text editor program running on a lousy computer is still a fine tool for creative writing. While a lousy computer might slow down certain processes, it is unlikely to affect the accuracy or quality of your writing.

The functionaly useful beauty inherent in any good text editor, lies primarily in its ability to respond to creative commands: cut, paste, move, copy, delete. Words, titles, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and whole epics may be adjusted, corrected, enlarged, reduced, edited, or thrown in the trash. Marvelous. There is nothing quite like it

actually, and the only way to experience anything better than a good text editor is to move on up to a high powered document processor or desktop publishing program. Marvelous again.

The other useful tool which nearly all computer and text editor owners possess, is the small bit of grey matter which resides between their ears; the creative mind, to wit. If in the process of writing a brief note to ourselves we have ever found the kernel of some creative idea and expanded it into some viable, vaguely readable story of some sort, then the creative process has been experienced. Let's proceed with the assumption that a good story, review, analysis, novel, biography, software precis, or letter to the editor exists within all of us.

First and foremost, the collective mind does not write well. Asking others for ideas about what to write will rarely provide any basis for anything about which we can truly express passion. The text editor must be the tool which allows us to express our own thoughts and ideas in the most trenchantly cohesive manner.

We must insist on writing about that which we know best, whatever it may be, even if it's only e-mail, BBS messages, or article postings in Usenet.

Although our thoughts can never be counted on to fall out in the most logical manner, typing everything into a file (however disorganized) is often the start of something worthwhile.

Afterwards, when all has been written, the functionality within the text editor may be used (cut, copy, move, paste, delete), to provide sense and reason. The biggest problem most people have is actually taking themselves in hand and examining their own prose with a truly vicious eye. Many people even find it difficult to delete a single word or sentence; the task of writing may have felt so onerous to begin with that the prospect of re-writing something may be too daunting. Such a situation does not indicate laziness or dullness or any baser emotions or traits, but rather a simple inability to write. There are a few among us who simply do not have the knack, at any level.

Never say die, however. If you feel

your existing skills do not measure up, understand that there are steps which can be taken to provide you with the basis for acceptable writing. There are only five simple steps. Follow them, and some degree of success is assured.

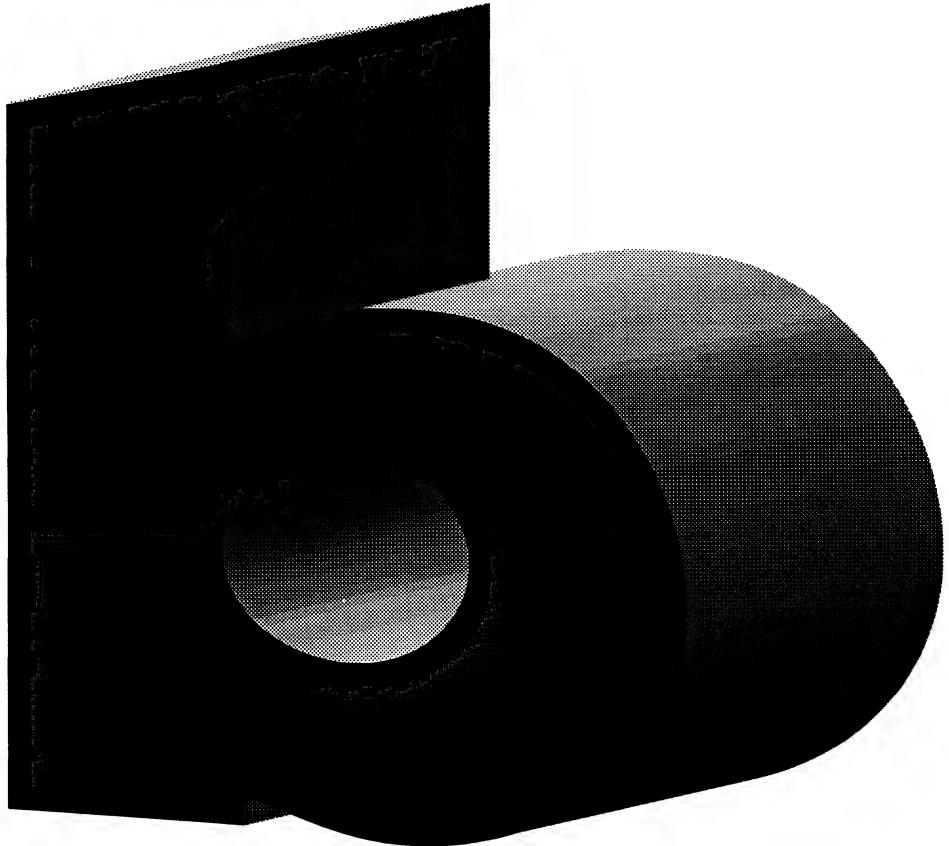
First - create an outline. Use your text editor to create a list of what you want to say. In order to be useful at any level of understanding, an outline must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Utilize cut, copy, move, paste and delete to arrange your outline. Place every point which should be at the beginning where it belongs. Read your outline carefully. Be vicious. Decide whether or not it all makes sense. Add notes (they'll help in step number two). Decide also, if the outline can be read and understood by a total stranger.

Second - follow the outline. Sudden, blinding flashes of insight notwithstanding, stick to your outline; it's ultimately the best guide for the completion of anything worthwhile. As more writing is accomplished, deviating from outlines becomes possible. Let experience be your guide.

Third - write from beginning to end. Do not start in the middle. Or the end. Re-read often. Re-draft often. A piece of writing that is not constantly being reassessed and repaired, is rarely worth reading. Be vicious. Will a total stranger understand what is being written?

Fourth - use a dictionary, a thesaurus and a good book on standard grammar. Use an external spellchecker such as Thunder or Spelling Sentry. Better still, utilize the superb spellcheckers integral to That's Write, AtariWorks or Papyrus. Utilize the effective spellcheckers within First Word Plus, Word Writer, Marcel, KeyWord Pro Plus, MS-Word or WordPerfect. After everything has been spellchecked, proof-read the entire document. Look for mistakes which a spellchecker will never catch: 'our' instead of 'hour', 'your' instead of 'you're', 'their' instead of 'they're', 'whose' instead of 'who's'. Ignorance IS bliss. Ignorance IS NOT communication!

Fifth - submit completed articles, reviews, etc., in the proper form. Never attempt to lay out a submission. Ask for guidelines and follow them religiously because doing so will provide the best chance for publication.



Current Notes Writers' Guidelines – 1996

Material that does not adhere to the following guidelines cannot be given any immediate attention. Current Notes receives submissions from all over the world, and we cannot take the time to teach individuals how to write, or indeed completely re-write their submissions for them.

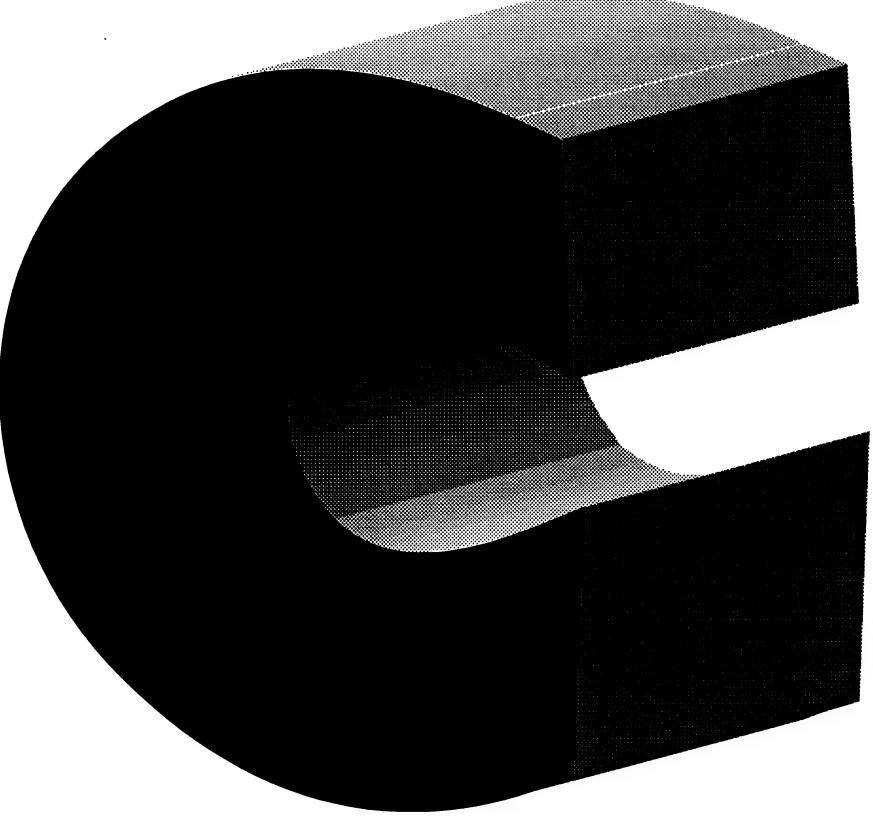
The best way to become a proficient writer is to write as often as possible, read as much as possible, and compare your own work to the work of others as much as possible. Be critical! Re-draft your work at least twice before considering making any submission. Train yourself to proofread word by word and line by line. Use a dictionary and a thesaurus. Purchase a good book about grammar. Above all else, spellcheck every document that you intend to submit for editing and/or publication.

1: You must familiarize yourself with basic grammar and spelling. Submissions

filled with words such as 'dont' (instead of 'don't'), 'couldnt' (instead of 'couldn't'), and 'then' instead of 'than', will be rejected out-of-hand. Magazine editors are not paid to be English teachers. Utilize proper left and right quote marks. Avoid the use of slang. Articles containing profanity of any kind will be rejected.

2: Spellcheck every document you're considering for submission to Current Notes. Documents which are riddled with spelling errors will be rejected out-of-hand. At all times, try to provide submissions which will be easier to accept because less work is involved in editing and typesetting.

3: All files submitted should be in ASCII format only. RTF, MS-Word, WP, STW, WW, etc., files will be rejected, and may only be re-submitted in ASCII. Do not submit Desktop Publishing formats of any kind. Although Current Notes uses Calamus SL exclusively, CDK files will not be accepted – there simply is not time and resources which can be dedicated to tracking down obscure PD fonts used in



your documents, or dismantling your CDK to export what we need! If a DTP program is used to write your submission, export the text as an ASCII file for submission.

4: All ASCII files must be Left-Justified ONLY. Data or information which must be set up with special formatting should be noted using brackets '[. . .]'. Do not attempt to set up an ASCII file with tabs, centering, or any emphasis characters (****, ///, #####, and so on). In addition, the use of BLOCK CAPITALS for emphasis is inappropriate. Effective writing rarely requires the use of such techniques in any case. Strive to produce emphasis with more effective words and sentence structure. Blank lines should be left between paragraphs and between each line of character dialog.

5: Address your subject matter directly. Examinations of the emotions surrounding your decision to write about something are of precious little interest. Submission length is crucial; reviews, how-to articles, and technical pieces must not contain more than 2,000 words. Essays, consumer advocacy articles, and news releases must not contain more than 1,000 words. We count. Space is money.

6: Address your subject matter professionally. Explanations about your full-time occupation as a carpet steam cleaner will not lend credence to a submission about computing software or hardware. While there is nothing wrong with carpet steam cleaning as an occupation, it is more important to discuss your subject matter than yourself. An organized, logical approach to description, analysis and conclusion will provide an authoritative note to any submission and something of potential value to readers. Listing an inappropriate Curriculum Vitae on the other hand, is liable to undermine whatever point you're trying to make.

7: At all times, strive to avoid the use of 'first person singular' references; specifically, avoid using the word 'I'.

8: Where appropriate, related graphics and/or screenshots should accompany submissions. Monochrome IMG or PI3 files are good. Greyscale TIF files are better. Please have the decency to

send us only those graphics which have been cleaned up to the best of your ability; grab only those portions of a screen which are important to your article, and use a paint, drawing or image processing program to clean them up.

9: By definition, effective writing provides effective communication. Effective communication is accomplished most readily about subjects with which you are familiar, or for which you have a real passion. Write only about what you know, or about what you're willing to learn. Readers may regard your article with respect and interest and your submission must therefore be thoroughly founded on both experience and peer review. Peer review refers specifically to verifying facts and general data with recognized authorities or sources.

10: Never submit articles of any kind which contain unverified data or commentary. The statement, "I heard they were going to discontinue the item," is completely inappropriate. Leave rumor and supposition to those who specialize in such things. If an item may be

discontinued (as in the preceding example), call, write or e-mail the individual or company which manufactures or distributes the item and either confirm or dispel the rumor. Obtain a build-out or sell-out date and put it in your submission. Submissions containing unconfirmed information cannot be published; we cannot spare staff to clean up rumor and innuendo.

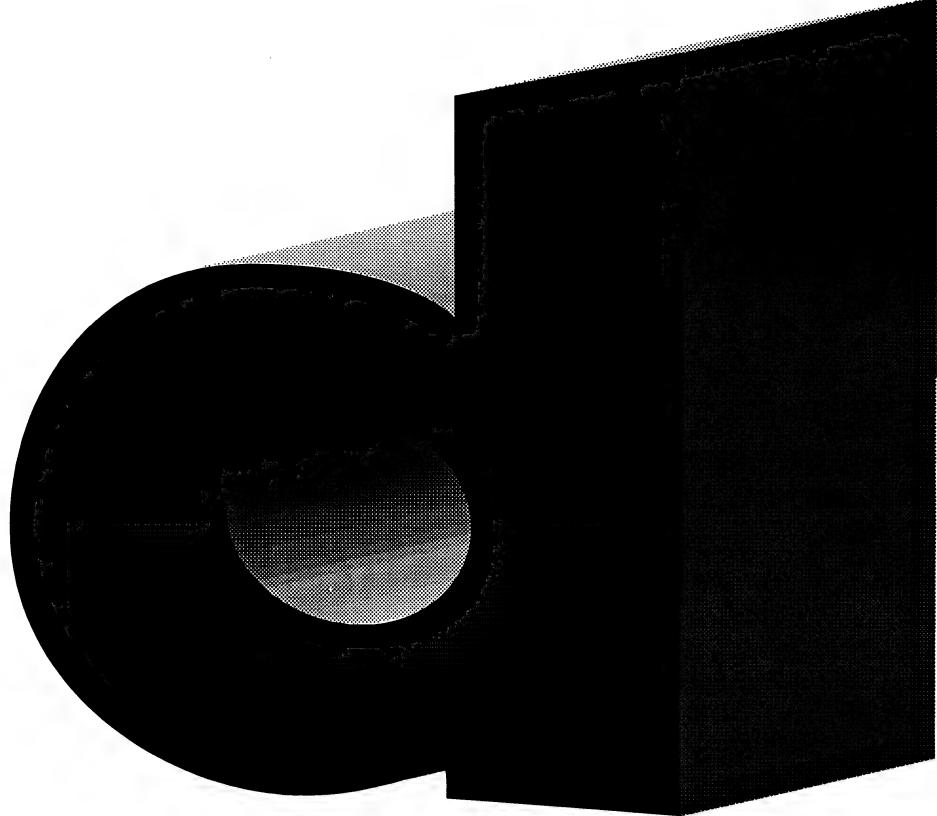
11: If you have been provided with a submission deadline, don't miss it! Late submissions are often discarded by most publishers simply because each issue which goes to press has a certain theme or feel. What was appropriate for one issue may not be appropriate for the next. A commitment to provide a submission means you are part of a project team. Each member of the team becomes responsible for their part of the whole project. Complications arise if individuals do not produce on time.

12: All staff writers, casual writers, and contributors are entitled to a free copy (of) or subscription to Current Notes (depending on the level of

submissions they provide). Monetary compensation is not provided at this time. All submissions become the property of Current Notes magazine. Printed submissions will not be returned under any circumstances unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope of appropriate size is supplied with the original submission. Please note that placing U.S. stamps on an envelope which must be eventually mailed from another country (Canada, for example), is a complete waste of stamps. For those of you who are unaware of these things, an individual in another country cannot mail an item to you, utilizing stamps from your country.

13: Submissions may be made via e-mail. The following procedures should be observed:

- a) Compress your file using ZIP.
- b) UUEncode the resulting ZIP. This step is crucial! Sending unencoded ZIPs into message buffers ruins them. Sometimes your Internet Service Provider (ISP) will automatically convert your ZIP message to a 'BIN-HEX' file, which is also useless to us.
- c) Send the resulting ASCII encoded binary file AS A MESSAGE to either: 'hcarson@io.org' or 'lianne@io.org' or 'redfrog@io.org'. DO NOT SEND IT TO MORE THAN ONE ADDRESS OR IT WILL BE REJECTED! If you are unfamiliar with the technique of assembling a UUE message and uploading to an on-line message prompt, consult your telecommunications software manual, the manual for your UUEncode/ Decode software or talk to a Sysop.
- d) Some ISPs provide for attachment of files to messages. This type of system sends a ZIP file from your own storage area on-line as well as an accompanying message. Be advised that most freenet and non-commercial ISPs don't provide such a service and any attempt to force such a transfer will likely result in Current Notes receiving a BIN-HEX file . . . which we have to reject! We will not be able to read it. Check with your ISP. Most recommend that you UUEncode your ZIP file.
- e) Normally, text-only submissions can be e-mailed as standard messages, without any sort of compression or encoding. If you're unfamiliar with the



technique of composing a message off-line in a text editor and uploading to an on-line message prompt, consult your telecommunications software manual or talk to a Sysop.

f) Submissions on 3.5" diskette ONLY should be mailed to:

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g) Your name, address, e-mail address (where applicable), and phone number must accompany all submissions and correspondence. This information and the word count should be typed in the upper left corner on page one of your submission.

14: Articles previously published with your by-line must be accompanied by appropriate releases from other publications which might have a copyright claim. Any submission to Current Notes magazine grants a corresponding copyright. You may retain a joint copyright, but not the sole copyright for any published submission.

15: Plagiarism and copyright

violations will be met with the most severe legal action.

16: We would rather hear from you than not! When in doubt about the efficacy of a potential submission, send it anyway!▲

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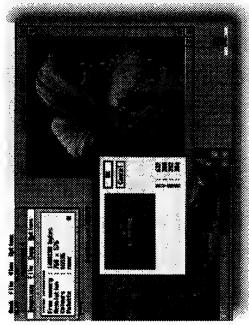
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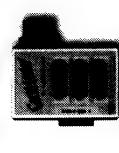
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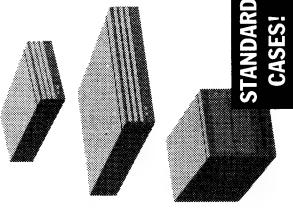
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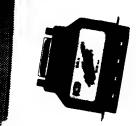


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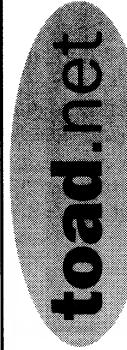
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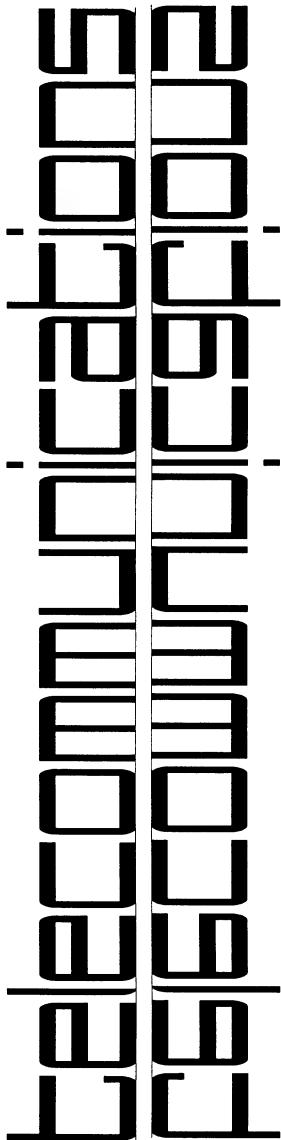
TOS, GEM and other good things . . .

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It doesn't seem all that long ago that I was cruising around local bulletin boards at the astounding speed of 300 baud. Back then, it was the speed at which everyone moved, with only a few lucky ones being in possession of those new-fangled high speed modems of the day that screamed along at 1200 baud. It doesn't seem all that long ago that the Internet was still an underground fad for University students around the world, where they could talk about school and whatever else came to mind. It wasn't all that long ago that our local bulletin boards were the places to be too. Times have been changing very quickly over the past several years. The Internet has emerged as a convenient 'new' means of telecommunication for the average person and commercial internet providers (ISPs) have been springing up like weeds. Talk of ISDN, ADSL and Cable phone lines is arising from complaints about slow speeds on our conventional phone system. But what's it all about? How will it affect us? Where in the heck are we going with all of this?

If you haven't already guessed, I am now the resident telecommunications man on these pages, and welcome to me. As well as wearing the ST/Jaguar Man hat, it is my duty to bring you up to date on all the latest in the world of telecommunications: hardware, software and interesting new services. This issue, I am going to look at a new technology that promises to provide affordable phone and Internet access that is much faster than conventional phone lines.

In 1995, Rogers Cable Systems in Toronto launched a test project in the suburb of Pickering for its new Cable Internet Service, known as 'Wave'. The Wave boasts a theoretical maximum speed of 500K per second throughput, and it sounds like it might be a cheap and fast alternative to conventional phone lines. At a projected cost of \$39.95 per month, subscribers to this new service will receive unlimited, 24-hour a day Internet access. Sound amazing? Considering that commercial providers in Canada and the U.S. often charge \$200 per month or more for such unlimited access, it seems incredible. Indeed, it almost sounds too good to be true. 500K per second and unlimited time online for just \$40 per month? Where do I sign up?

But before you sign on the dotted line, you should be aware of the fine print that is not available in the brochure. The Rogers Wave service is not all it appears to be (who'd have guessed?). First of all, in order to take advantage of the new technology you'll need an IBM or Mac computer. The reasons for this are threefold. First, the \$39.95 monthly fee includes the licensing of both a special Cable Modem, and an Ethernet card. Both of these are naturally internal cards, and therefore will be incompatible with anything but the most recent PC and MAC hardware incarnations. Second, the driver software that comes with the cable modem runs only on PCs and Macs, and is used to drive both cards so that you can use Wave with conventional Internet SLIP software. Atarians have been left out in the cold. According to Frank Kotter, Director of Business Development at Rogers Wave, the reason for this is simply that, "we have to support and maintain the rental hardware and software, and therefore can only cater to those machines which it makes good business sense to support." In other words, supporting machines such as the Amiga, Atari or PowerPC is a losing proposition. Of course, that shouldn't stop some enterprising programmers on the other platforms from devising their own

C U R R E N T

hardware and software. So we may yet see something that will permit TOS/GEM machines to work with cable modems. The third caveat is that age-old proviso, "Theoretical Maximum." Theoretically one could drive a car down any highway at 120 mph for as long as one wanted, provided there were no other cars on the highway, and the vehicle's aerodynamics were perfect and there was no wind resistance, and it was equipped with tires that generated no friction, and well, you get the idea. Because of the way the Wave is set up, you don't get that full 500K per second bandwidth all to yourself. Others on your Wave cable trunk line will be sharing the same bandwidth. That means the amount of effective throughput which can be achieved depends entirely on how many other people are sharing the same bandwidth. If there are ten people on one 500K band, each transferring a file at the same time, the bandwidth will be divided by 10, giving each person an effective throughput of 50K per second. Of course you'd be lucky to have so few people sharing your bandwidth. Chances are, you'll actually be sharing it with hundreds of people. Suddenly, that 500K per second doesn't sound possible after all. Suddenly, 5K per second is a lot more realistic.

There's more. When Rogers talks of 500k per second, they're talking about kiloBITS. Eight bits make up one byte, therefore 500 kilobits per second equals 62.5 kilobytes per second. To put this in terms modem users can understand, 500 kilobits per second is the equivalent of a 500,000 BPS modem, or roughly 17.3 times faster than a v.FAST 28,800 BPS modem. That's the 'Theoretical Maximum' mind you. The reason for classifying the speed in kilobits is not a marketing gimmick (like that which many video game console manufacturers have taken to using). Rather, it is because kilobits have long been the established method of expressing the speed of Ethernet connections! Because Rogers Wave is essentially an Ethernet connection, they chose to express its speed in this manner. It would have been clearer however, if they had used the current method of expressing kilobits, 'Kb' rather than 'K', which most computer literate people recognize as kilobytes.

But is that really so bad? Even v.FAST modems average only 3.2K (25.6Kb) per second (or more if the data being transferred isn't already compressed). Even if the increase in speed of a cable service over conventional phone lines is nominal, \$39.95 per month for unlimited

Internet access is still impressive; more so considering that the alternative of having an ISDN line installed in your home costs much more. An ISDN line does provide faster throughput: 1.5 megabytes per second for the lowest grade line. But it still requires a special ISDN modem for you to be able to connect to a local provider, and you still have to pay for the Internet service on top of that. Wave is certainly no worse than 28.8k, and can sometimes be better by a wide margin. The Rogers Wave service also comes with free software and free technical support to get you up and running. Netscape for WorldWide Web browsing and Eudora for E-Mail are both included. Okay, so that's nothing ground-breaking. These programs are free anyway. But all in all, even considering the possible downfalls, it still sounds like a better deal than most other Internet providers which offer only conventional dialup access.

One of the other benefits of the Cable Internet service is the fact that because it's cable, you are not subject to long distance charges if you don't have a local Rogers outlet. That may not seem like much, but consider some of the side effects. With the (sometimes dramatic) increase in bandwidth, programs like I-Phone (a Windows SLIP program which allows you to speak to anyone in the world who is connected to the I-Phone server), will be treated to an upgrade which permits greater clarity and faster throughput. Some Internet servers even provide live radio broadcasts, which you will be able to listen to in real time. You can do this now with conventional dialup lines, but the fidelity is awful. And how about those fanciful AT&T "You Will" commercials, which offer futuristic peeks into what will come of this new

"technological age?" They're not possible yet, not by a big stretch, but the cable service could conceivably be a small genuflection to that goal.

Of course, there are still questions to be answered. What about running your own FTP site or World Wide Web page? According to Frank Kotter, these will be made available to the end user for an additional monthly fee. The reason for the fee is due to the fact that such sites tend to draw heavy traffic, and therefore your FTP or Website would be taking more than its fair share of the bandwidth.

What of future speed increases? I am told that a 27 megabit (3.375 megabyte) per second cable modem will be available by the end of 1996 or early in 1997, and that a 400 megabit (50 megabyte) per second cable modem is currently being developed in the Rogers labs.

So some of the hardcore technophiles will scoff at the comparatively low bandwidth currently offered by cable services as compared to ISDN. Consider the cost of a high-speed ISDN line and the cable proposition begins to look a great deal more attractive. It's particularly sensible for those who still don't have their cyberlegs yet, or who don't want to plunge head-first into Cyberspace going full throttle, or who simply can't afford ISDN. We'll wait and see. It's a new and emerging technology, but I'd say that it does have a great deal of potential, and there are certainly signs of improvement. Who knows? Perhaps this time next year we will all be talking video-phone style, to friends in Berlin. Look for the Wave service (or it's equivalent) to show up soon in your Province, State, County or City.▲

Modem? What modem?

They're not all created equal, that's for sure. They're also labeled with confusing numbers: 9600, 14.4K, 28.8K, and so on. The best deal you'll find these days is on 14.4K fax/modems. The 28.8K jobs are still very pricey.

Brand name units made by U.S. Robotics, Supra, Hayes, GVC and quite a few others can be connected easily to your Atari, Amiga, PC or Mac. These little devils can also be purchased for as little as \$50, at all of the major computer stores. They're also being sold (increasingly) at places such as Wal Mart, Sears, Eaton's, K-Mart and other department store chains.

There are also a few shady deals out there. Before purchasing any fax/modem anywhere, have the store clerk open up the box so that you can inspect the warranty card. If the unit is being purchased in North America the card should have a U.S. or Canadian address. If it doesn't, don't bother wasting your hard earned money because it's likely that the 'warranty' is unusable or just, plain fraudulent.

It's not a bad idea to check out the addresses too. A \$4 or \$5 phone call to verify the serial number might save you a lot of money later on, when you have to replace a phony piece of junk that gave out. It's possible to find garbage in the most reputable stores too, so beware!

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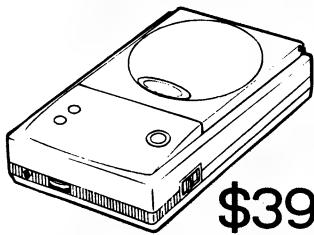
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PLEASURE AND PAIN?

I'm a clipart packrat, plain and simple.

Part of it comes from one of my jobs designing signs for retail store sales, instructions, reminders, and store policies. One of the things I've learned, is to catch the attention of the customer. Plain text just won't do; some sort of graphic is needed to go along with the text to pull the customer into what you're trying to say. I'm now also sending faxes for the company using STraight Fax, and like to perk up the faxes with a graphic or two.

Graphics and clipart are also enjoyable simply because looking at what other people have done with their skills can be a marvelous experience. I consider myself somewhat of a frustrated artist. I can doodle, and have done some cartooning in the past for fun and for student newspapers, but I don't have the skills of the true artists who create commercial or aesthetic art. I admire that sort of dedication to a craft.

Dan Dreibelbis has a look at the Electronic Spinster Graphics CD



Over the years I've amassed quite a collection of clipart, mostly from PC public domain houses. Much of the stuff is quite good. However, recently I'd become frustrated with two things about these collections:

1) Graphic Formats. Most clipart for the PC is in the formats native to that platform: PCX, TIF, WMF, WPG, et al. Often a specific image is needed for a project and there's no way for to find the image easily. Each file has to be either loaded into a program (such as GEM View) capable of reading those formats, or taken 'en masse' and converted to a native Atari format such as GEM Image (IMG). Either way, it's time consuming and aggravating when you're under the gun to complete a project.

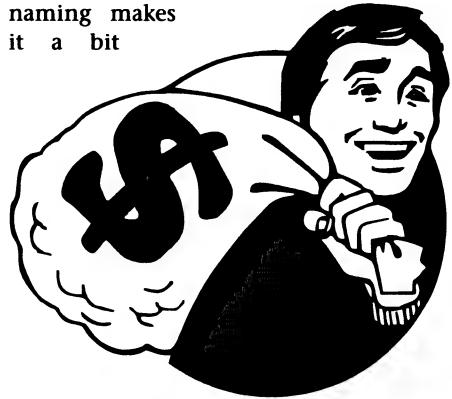
2) Graphic Dimensions. To make sure the chosen image is properly proportioned to printer resolution (and in the case of bitmapped graphics, to eliminate jaggies) I utilize the Optimize Size for Printer function in Calamus SL's Frame module. However, I also utilize a Canon BJ-5 BubbleJet printer that has a resolution mode of 360x360 dpi for my final product. I find too many of these graphics are quite tiny. In fact, when optimized, you often need a magnifying

glass to see them when the final results are printed. The graphics are useless for many display purposes.

THE SOLUTION!

Last November chroMagic Software introduced a new CD-ROM consisting of the entire library of Electronics Spinster Graphics, a computer clipart house. What makes this CD special though, is that all the graphics on the CD are in native Atari formats: 6,000 IMG raster images, and 1,000 vector images in both GEM Metafile and CVG (Calamus) format.

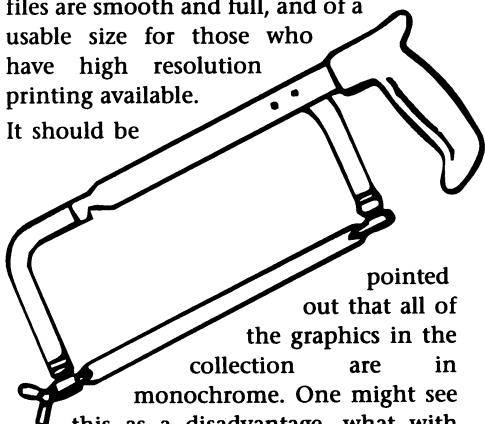
First off, the collection has been logically organized by category and subject. Finding the graphic type you need is a snap. Look inside the main folders (CLIPART for raster, VECTOR for vector) and you'll find a number of sub-folders covering a wide variety of subjects: 64 different subjects in the CLIPART folder, 44 in the VECTOR folder. These subjects include things like ANIMALS, BORDERS, DROPCAPS, DOLLS, EDUCATION, FOOD, OFFICE, OFF_HUMOR, and so on. Most (but not all) of the graphics also have their own distinctive names as well. The inconsistency in naming makes it a bit



hard to determine which graphic is which in some folders, and a breeze in others. The problem pops up in the GEM and CVG folders, where files are given a subject name and then a sequential number, like MONEY_25.GEM, MONEY_26.GEM, etc. The 8 character limit GEM provides for naming files makes it difficult to come up with completely distinctive names for so many files. Though it might add to the cost, an optional companion hardcopy catalogue should be available for every CD of this magnitude and quality.

Now to the graphics themselves. These are the best I've ever seen in any graphics collection, bar none! The raster graphics are very well drawn, and great care appears to have been taken when scanning them into the computer. Most of the image dimensions are HUGE, too! Even when loading them into Calamus and optimizing them for use with my BJ-5, they still remain at a legible, viewable size for my projects. The same can be said of the vector format graphics. Most of the files are smooth and full, and of a usable size for those who have high resolution printing available.

It should be



pointed out that all of the graphics in the collection are in monochrome. One might see this as a disadvantage, what with recent price drops in colour printers

making the availability of colour to the average Atari user feasible. However, the use of color graphics is much more complex (see Running Out Of RAM in this issue). Besides, much of the desktop publishing done these days relies heavily on black and white images, especially if you are putting together a newsletter, leaflets, handbills, brochures, or store signs! These graphics will add power and impact to your projects.

Included on this CD-ROM (in the ATARI folder) are a number of graphics viewers and conversion programs. It's a nice touch, and there's sure to be something here you may find useful. Included are the powerful PD program Atari Image Manager (AIM v3.1) and the demo version of GEM View3, (my image viewer & manipulator of choice). The GEM View version on the CD is v3.10 and you can find v3.15 in most disk libraries, ftp sites, and BBS file areas. You'll get the latest version when you register GEM View! PicSwitch v1.01 is here too, and is quite speedy at reading and rendering graphics. Note that PicSwitch will only save a converted file as an IMG, when



running in monochrome mode. There are also number of other small programs for reading and converting IMGs.

The Electronic Spinster Graphics CD-ROM is an essential collection for Atari/TOS/GEM desktop publishers. What few flaws there are in this product are soundly overridden by the sheer number and quality of the graphic files in hand. As for me, I'm beginning to dream up some projects for work based on some of these graphics! ▲

Electronic Spinster Graphics

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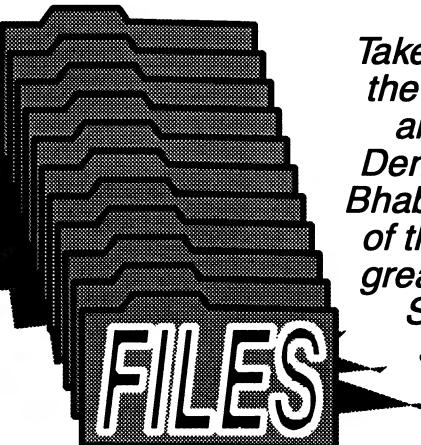
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The CyberStrider CyberStrider



The CyberStrider Files

Take a seat, relax and read the reasons you enjoy using the Atari - simply PD! I've said it many times before, and I'll say it again: the Atari PD and shareware scene is booming. Never before has there been so much software for the Atari. So what if it isn't commercial. The quality is just as good, if not better! I would like to point out that if you register via my shareware support scheme or Joe Connor's, you must add £1 to the list price to cover the extra postage. Any programs reviewed in Current Notes have this added on.

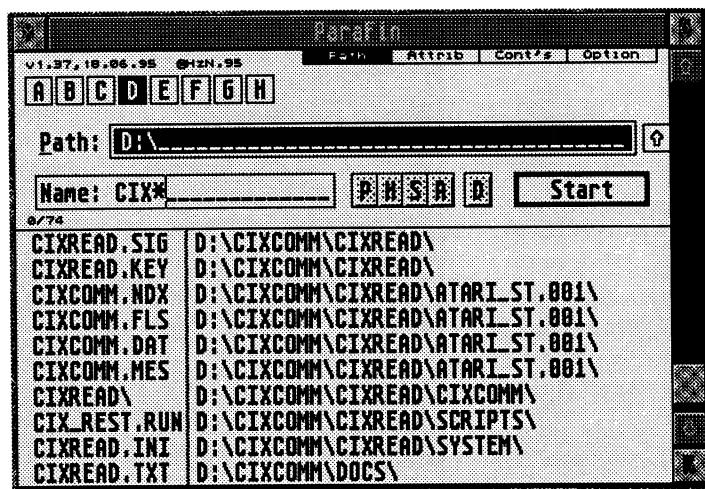
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made out in dollars. For this reason, please send bank drafts or postal money orders in pounds sterling. If you have any queries, please contact me through the magazine or via e-mail.

Parafin v1.37. Shareware by Hartwig Zur Nieben. All Ataris.

Parafin, or Parallel Finder, is a background file searching utility which will be mainly handy for hard drive users. It can search on several drives and recursive paths for files, given enough search parameters. You can use it as either a program or an accessory with the latter letting you search for files from within other programs.

Fully GEM compliant, everything is done within one window which is split into two halves. The top half lets you specify the search parameters while the bottom half displays the results of the search. Search parameters can be set by using the



Search for files quickly and easily with the help of Parafin!

mouse or by keyboard shortcuts. It all looks a bit daunting, but the documentation explains everything quite well.

Parafin supports the AV-Protocol, so any files resulting from the search can be executed by double clicking on them. The window can also be iconified or even placed behind other windows without interrupting the search! What's more those of you who use MinixFS under MultiTOS can take advantage of long file-name compatibility.

Parafin has been converted into English and it certainly knocks the socks off any of the competitors. Registration is a mere £7 via the CyberStrider shareware scheme and for something this powerful you can't complain about the price! Score: 8/10

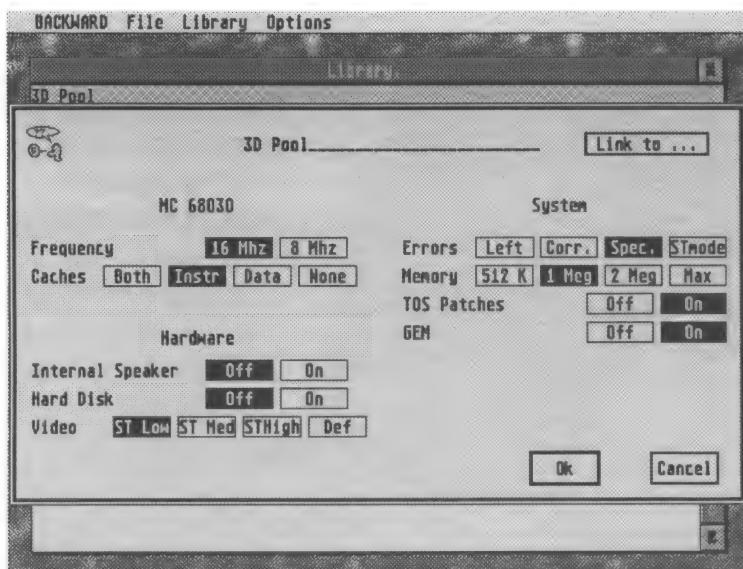
Backward 3.10a. Shareware by Cyrille Dupydauby. Falcon only.

Backward is an ST emulator for the Falcon. Why on earth would anyone want to make their Falcon ST compatible? Put simply, it lets Falcon owners access a large number of excellent ST games which would otherwise be attracting flies in a rubbish tip somewhere.

You run the program, make a few configuration changes and bring your old ST games to life. Being memory resident you can alter the set up via keyboard shortcuts. It even has its own desktop with which to launch programs.

Backward is quite easy to use and comes with comprehensive documentation. The preset configurations also give a good idea of how the program works. The unregistered version provides 20 preset configurations and the £13 registration fee brings extra ones. The full version lets you store up to 2000 presets! If you want to run your fave ST game on the Falcon, get this. Score: 8/10

Take a file tour of the Hensa Atari archive with Denesh (Danny) Bhabuta! Reviews of the latest and greatest PD and Shareware software!



Going Backwards!
Emulate the ST... on a Falcon!!
Game players take note...

The Lost Blubb Demo. Freeware by Lazer. Falcon only.

The Falcon has never been given full credit as a machine capable of stunning graphics effects. This may be due to so few demos being available which show the Falcon to its full potential. The Lost Blubb demo is here to change all that. It won first prize at the last Fried Bits Coding Convention, and quite rightly so. The demo lasts around five minutes and along with being visually stunning is great in the music section too, with crisp, clear sound.

The Lost Blubb is based around a woman dancing (supposed to be the programmer's girlfriend) doing different moves, with a wide variety of backgrounds giving the demo an up-to-date music video feel. You occasionally move away from the dancing woman to get other special graphical effects such as burning wood, and moving along a road that leads to the clouds.

The demo comes on four high density floppies, and takes up 7Mb of hard disk space when installed. You also need to have 3.6Mb of free memory and it can only be viewed on a RGB monitor or TV. Whether you are a demo junkie or not, The Lost Blubb is one you definitely have to own, even if only to make those PC guys shut up once and for all.

Score:10/10 The Lost Blubb - The demo that every self respecting Falcon owner should have on their hard disk

Well, I seem to have run out of space again... till the next time!

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The Lost Blubb - the demo that every self-respecting Falcon owner should have on their hard disk!

**Download Blues?
Archive Blues?**

There's a lot of new software out there; stuff that can't possibly have shown up on any of the popular CDs yet, for instance. Grabbing (downloading) and organizing all of the BBS and ftp riches should be your first step in building a genuinely useful library of TOS/GEM, DOS, Windows, Amiga or Mac software. Don't put it off. Organize now!

One of the best pieces of software we've seen for TOS/GEM computer users is a little item called *STD CAT* program (Standard Catalog). It's used by such massive disk libraries as the Toronto Atari Federation's 16/32-Bit Library. The latest version of *STD CAT* is v5.2. Look for it.

There are a couple of other things you might want to keep in mind when downloading from BBS and ftp sites. First and foremost, don't automatically download everything that sounds new. Check your collection before taking a chance on downloading something you already have. You'd be surprised at the number of older files that have been re-archived with new names; while you're on-line, call for a verbose listing of the archive contents. If necessary, ask your Sysop for help.

Second, it's nice to share. If you've been downloading files on a regular basis, upload to your User Group's BBS. Remember that not everyone has a modem either. There are still plenty of folks who will benefit from contributions you make to your group's disk library.

Third, don't be an account hog. If you do a lot of downloading from local BBS sources, invest in at least a 14.4K modem. Plodding along at 2400 baud was just fine when far fewer people were online and 2400 baud was the best available. The demands on BBS and commercial service lines is far greater these days however.

Getting on and off-line quickly means you'll have more time for yourself and lower on-line costs as well! ▲



DRAW-EDIT

**Lianne Reitter of
GreebleWorks! looks
at a series of Paint,
Draw, and Image
Editing software. This
month . . . PIXART!**

So the other day my boyfriend comes through my apartment door and says:

"Look honey, I brung ya' something!" Well, it's not my birthday, but if he thinks it is, I'll go along - anything for a present! Oh boy! What a good surprise! PaintPro! Only the state-of-the-art drawing program . . . in 1986.

"Gee thanks. You always bring me the neatest stuff." My sarcasm didn't escape him.

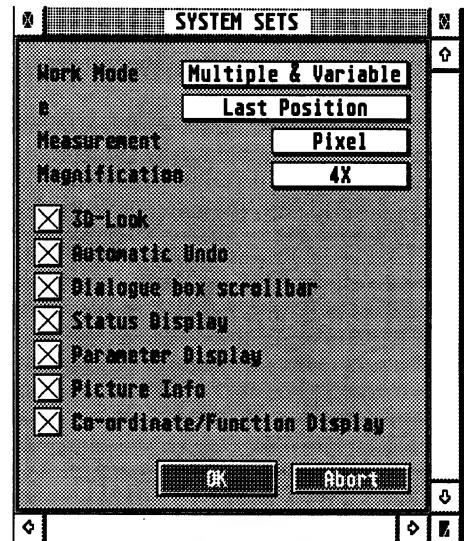
"Well," he said "I thought you could keep it for your archives. Besides, it was a freebie!"

I felt it necessary to explain to him that when I got my Falcon030, I wasn't concerned about its compatibility with 9 year old software, least of all another paint program. Believe it or not PaintPro actually worked. To my surprise, I discovered not much has changed in paint programs' standard functions in that 9 years. Circles and squares and spray cans all work the same way. I can't believe that after all this time, no one has designed different fill patterns. But still, there are some other very important improvements that have taken place in recent years. What was so modern and up-to-date 9 years ago, now qualifies only as a doodle program for the kids, thanks to programs like Pixart.

Pixart is a bitmap drawing program. It works in all resolutions: 2, 4, 16, 256 and Falcon True Colour mode. Most of what

you may be familiar with in a colour paint program can be found in Pixart. Circles, Squares, Ellipses and Straight Lines are drawn by placing the cursor (mouse pointer) on the working page and starting the shape with a click of the left mouse button. Dragging the mouse will size the shape, and a second left mouse click will end the procedure. Here is where the first of many functions that I find absolutely necessary can be found. After the shape has been created, you can drag it into position with the mouse and then make as many copies of that shape as you need, placing them freely anywhere you want. This is an artistic boon, because a paint program that deals only with precise start points is no more than a formatted disk if you ask me - more of a drafting tool than a genuine art program.

All of Pixart's drawing tools are configurable. The Eraser is sized much like the shapes are, by dragging the mouse



edited to suit your needs. This may not be such a bad thing since most of the standard fill patterns are so recognizable, they make even the most original drawing look like it's been done before. This way you are forced to be creative.

Like all colour paint programs, Pixart uses a Colour Palette. This palette will reflect the same colours that are in whatever colour mode you happen to be working. You can also set the palette to reflect only those colours used in a pre-loaded picture, which is perfect for edit-

PixArt File Extras



until the size suits you. The Pixel Size and Shape can be anything from a double point to a star. Line Size and Style, Spray Can Nozzle Size and Fill patterns are all accessed through the bottom six icons of the left menu bar. While I am not entirely thrilled with the selection of fill patterns (only 24 in total) they can be

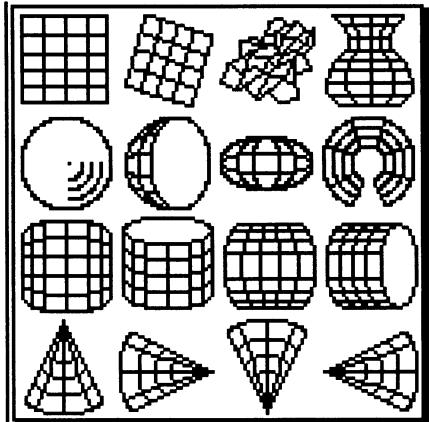
ing. Unfortunately I have yet to find a way to pick a colour from the picture. I have to rely on my eyes to pick the right colour from the palette.

Speaking of editing, nothing bothers me more than a program that will not allow me to get close enough to change

small parts of a picture. The Zoom functions in Pixart are perfect, and work in two ways. First you can enlarge the whole picture using the Magnifying Glass function on the top icon bar. Further magnification is accomplished by using the magnifying glass option in the left side menu bar. This Zoom function is configurable from 2, 4, 8, and 16 times the normal size of the picture. You can get so close, you can actually loose your concept of what it was you wanted to change!

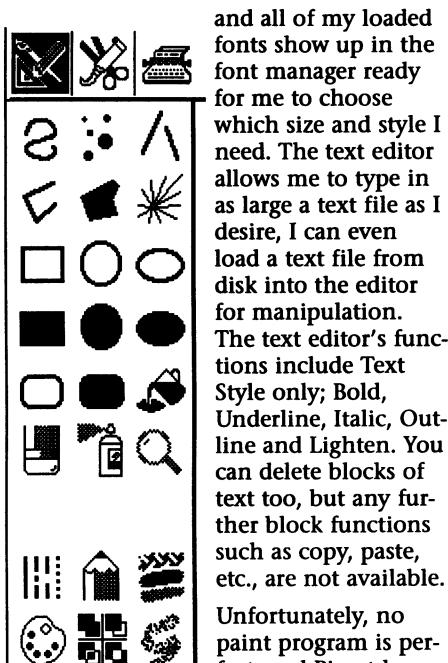
Beside these standard functions, Pixart has a host of special functions using the Block features. By either stretching a box around a portion of your picture (or the whole thing) or cutting out a precise shape, you can manipulate the block, creating infinite effects. Stretch, rotate, skew or tilt, all are easily done by a click of an icon located on the left menu bar.

So far Pixart sounds a lot like several other paint programs. It is in the block functions area that you will have the most fun with this program. How would



like to project your design on to a vase shape, or make that scanned picture of your brother-in-law look like it's been all crumpled up? Using the Text function of Pixart along with the block functions, you can type your name (or anything else) in your favorite font, and project it onto a ball. It's a great 3-D effect; something that can turn even the blandest effort into something interesting. Pixart also supports Scanners, Graphic Tablets, and Video Digitizers. You need special drivers for these functions, all of which are available separately from HOMA Systems. I have every intention in getting the Scanner driver. My new hand scanner and Pixart are going to make a terrific pair.

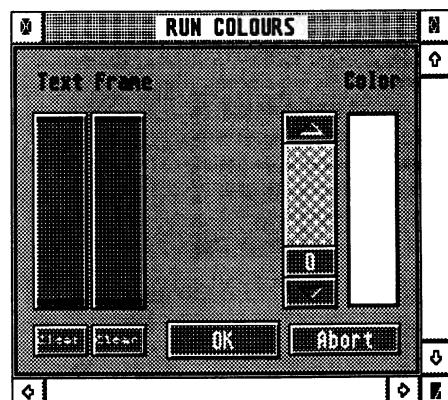
Pixart supports SpeedoGDOS, GDOS and Signum fonts. There may be other fonts supported, but without the full manual, I can't say for sure. I use Speedo,



and all of my loaded fonts show up in the font manager ready for me to choose which size and style I need. The text editor allows me to type in as large a text file as I desire, I can even load a text file from disk into the editor for manipulation. The text editor's functions include Text Style only; Bold, Underline, Italic, Outline and Lighten. You can delete blocks of text too, but any further block functions such as copy, paste, etc., are not available. Unfortunately, no paint program is perfect, and Pixart has

some errors that are so glaring, I wonder what Lexicor was thinking during the time they had control of this piece of software. Why would anyone try to sell a TOS/GEM program in North America that uses Signum fonts over Calamus, True Type, or Bitstream fonts? While I did mention that Pixart uses Bitstream fonts, neither the text style nor its colour can be changed. THESE FUNCTIONS ARE AVAILABLE ONLY FOR SIGNUM FONTS. Of the 46 Font disks in the TAF library only 2 are of Signum fonts - that should give you an idea of how widely used they are in this part of the world. Mind you, that might be the reason that the only part of Pixart that has not undergone a German to English translation is the Text Editor!

When you first look at Pixart you think, 'Oh, how modern. All those effects, and it's configurable as all get out!' You can choose the resolution of your drawing, the number of dots per inch, the order of the pop up menus and keyboard shortcuts. It loads and saves any



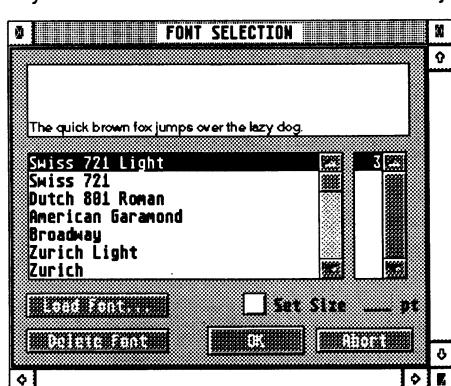
number of file formats (IMG, TIF, IFF, PCX, etc.) and it's very difficult to find any aspect of Pixart that should be changed to better suit real creative, artistic needs, except for one thing: why does this paint program not draw Bezier curves? I mean how pathetic! Every piece of shareware out there draws Bezier curves! Bezier curves are the main reason paint and drawing programs are so popular; even the totally uncoordinated, can draw a perfectly good picture with them. Bezier curves are the most important thing in any paint program and I challenge anyone to find reason to disagree. So why omit that function? Do Germans have better hand-eye coordination? Nima Montaser and everyone at HOMA Systems in Ottawa have a truly great program with Pixart. I will be using Pixart exclusively for picture manipulation and colouring monochrome IMGs. Unfortunately, without the Bezier Curves I can't do very much in the way of creating anything original.

So my search goes on for the perfect paint program. I'll keep you posted next issue. While I highly recommend Pixart for its picture manipulation functions, it lacks a lot of special drawing features that make similar programs far more versatile for creating original works. You couldn't ask for a more stable or configurable program than Pixart however, and it does have a lot to offer to both the power and occasional user.

Pixart is available in Canada from Homa Systems House (613) 722-0901, Scarborough Computers (416) 491-3139 & Computer Direct 1-800-547-9203.

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Lianne is a CN copy editor & contributes to both Current Notes and the TAF newsletter, The Phoenix. She also operates a small graphic design company called GreebleWorks! ▲



C U R R E N T
36 N O T E S

Scott Chilcote conducts an interesting odyssey through the wilderness we call . . .

**Everything
you always
wanted to
know!**

MINT
and

**Part one of
a series . . .**

MINT
MULTITOS

**Scott Chilcote's Unofficial
Advanced User's Guide to
MultiTOS: Part 1**

Edited by: Eric March

Two years ago, shortly after the purchase of an Atari Falcon030, I decided to sit down and write an article on the features of MiNT for the Falcon user. I'd read the MultiTOS chapter in the Falcon Owner's Manual, and the 8-page MultiTOS Quickstart User's guide, but it became evident there were many features that had not even been mentioned. During the past two years I hoped that someone would come forward and put the inner details of MultiTOS in an article, but as far as I've been able to tell it hasn't happened.

This guide is intended to cover features included in MiNT v1.04 which comes with the Falcon, through v1.12 which is current as of February 1996. Most of the material to be covered here has been culled from personal experience, the Usenet Atari ST Newsgroups, and the Developer's Notes provided with the current release. Much of this information may also be found in Scott Sander's excellent book The Atari Compendium. The book (which is also now available on CD-ROM) is breathtaking and it should be part of every TOS/GEM enthusiast's library.

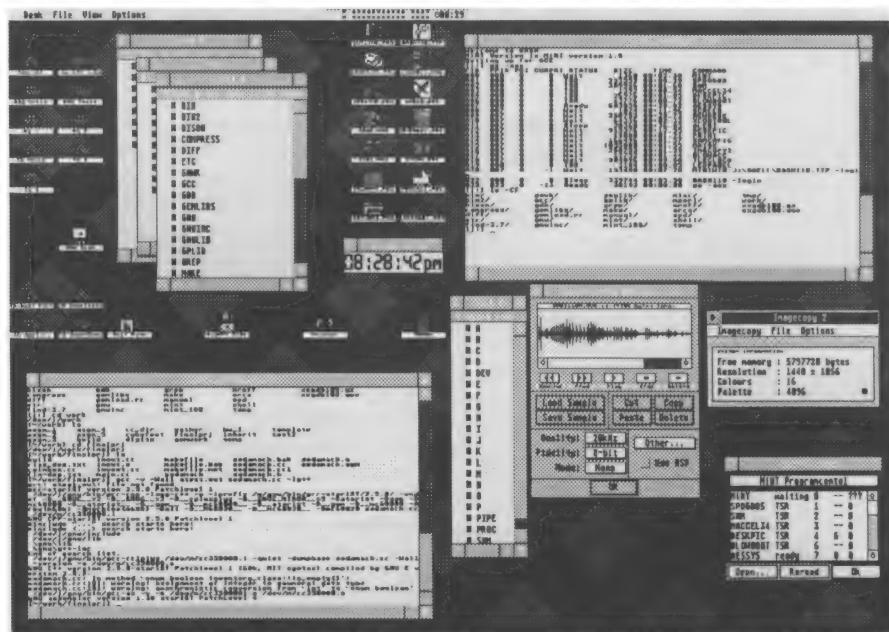
IS IT MULTITOS OR IS IT MINT?

In the early days of MiNT, the acronym meant 'MiNT is Not TOS'. This recursive acronym style gained its popularity in the Unix world, where Richard Stallman's GNU project gave us 'GNU's Not Unix'. GNU is the name of a very large freeware project which brought us among much else, the excellent GNU C/C++/Objective C Compiler. MiNT, which was changed to

mean 'MiNT is Now TOS' with the Atari release, refers to the MiNT operating system itself. MiNT is sometimes referred to as the multi-tasking Kernel. MultiTOS (MTOS) in contrast, pertains not specifically to the operating system, but to all of the extensions and modifications made to GEMDOS, the part of the Atari operating system (TOS) that handles the input & output of your various peripherals, in order to make it more compatible with MiNT. For example, the 'Desk' menu was changed to show which MiNT programs are running, and the 'Options' menu allows different INF files to be loaded under MTOS.

MiNT IS NOW TOS OR IS IT UNIX?

MiNT is a tremendous boon to Atari developers and users because it provides many of the advanced features of the Unix operating system. The same reasons that make a multitasking OS popular with developers apply to experienced users as well. Because this advanced operating system is free, why not take advantage of it? Even if Mint didn't come with your computer, it's easy enough to download. For those who intend to work with Unix someday, it's a great way to learn and use almost every feature found on modern Unix systems: pre-emptive multitasking, shell languages (in layman's



U:\DEV*.*				
0 bytes used in 17 items.				
FD	888	1184	81/14/96	89:34 pm
AUX	888	620288	81/14/96	89:34 pm
CENTR	888	1824	81/14/96	89:34 pm
CON	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
CONSOLE	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
KBD	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MIDI	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MODEM1	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MODEM2	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MOUSE	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MULL	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
PRN	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
SERIAL2	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
STDERR	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
STDIN	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
STDOUT	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm
TTY	888	868	81/14/96	89:34 pm

The DEV Folder. There are plenty of device drivers available for MiNT! The first folder shown, FD, contains all of the possible drivers needed for floppy and hard disk partitions.

terms, batch file programming), advanced file systems, pipes (which permit two or more programs running concurrently to send information to each other), redirection (which alters the source of input & output), and memory protection. It's all in there.

'HIDDEN' FEATURES

Let's get to know MiNT a little better. Did you know that:

- there is a single folder under MTOS that contains not only every drive and folder on your system, but all of the running programs and device drivers?
- you can configure GEM under MTOS to run multiple programs automatically when it starts up?
- you can fine tune MiNT for both responsiveness (how much processor time is given to each program you have loaded in memory) and memory usage?
- you can select which different SpeedoGDOS Fonts GEM will use for the desktop under MTOS?
- there are two new ways to exit a running application under MiNT? These are just some of the goodies beneath MiNT's surface. Let's start by looking at a new Drive Icon that can be used to get to just about everything else: the Unified File System.

UNIFIED FILE SYSTEM

Having a Unified, or 'Root' file system is a standard feature on Unix systems. It's a way to make all of your disk files seem as if they sprout from the root of a single tree-like directory structure. All of the directories and files, regardless of their

physical location, stem from the same top level directory. A Unix root file system combines all disk drives into one parent directory for easy file access and manipulation. The MiNT root file system takes this concept even further.

We can create a root folder under MultiTOS by creating a drive icon with the letter U (for Unified). Open it into a window and you'll see that all of the floppy drive letters and hard disk partitions plus a few other odd folders, are listed in this window! If we click and open any of the drive letters in the window, we'll be accessing the folders or directories on the drive selected. This means that with just two 'U:' windows, we can copy any file on any drive to any other location! There are several other ways that 'U:' directories come in handy. In addition to the drive/partition folders, there are some other new folders on the 'U:' drive. These additional folders are unique to MiNT: the DEV, PIPE, PROC, and SHMEM folders.

The DEV folder contains the device drivers that MultiTOS knows about. Device drivers are special files that contain descriptions which MiNT can use to access any specialized hardware

U:\PROC*.*				
9929312 bytes used in 10 items.				
MIINT	888	1184	81/14/96	89:34 pm
△ RESSYS	883	620288	81/14/96	89:34 pm
SCREEN	884	1824	81/14/96	89:34 pm
MEMDESK	885	8388688	81/14/96	89:34 pm
XCONTROL	886	69536	81/14/96	89:35 pm
△ ALERT	887	28384	81/14/96	89:35 pm
IMGCOPY2	888	386816	81/14/96	89:35 pm
BLOWMCC	889	12768	81/14/96	89:35 pm
MAKERPRN	892	223424	81/14/96	89:37 pm
TLKLCLOCK	893	2845568	81/14/96	89:37 pm

Picture 5: The PROC folder. Any program currently running will be shown here, including desk accessories. Note that two of the processes MiNT needs have the "locked" symbol, a small triangle to the left of the process name; these items, along with SCREEN, MIINT, and

attached to the system. Some example Device Drivers include our printer (PRN), our modem (SERIAL1), and our screen (CONSOLE and STDOUT, among others). New device drivers become available from time to time. To experiment with a new device for your system, look in the MiNT ftp archives on the Internet (the addresses are in the sidebar). Each archive directory has a file called '0index', which contains a list and brief description of the available files (a future installment will provide more details and examples).

The PIPE folder contains pipes. They're temporary structures in memory used by Unix-style programs to send information to each other. At least two programs

(processes) must be running in order to use pipes. Pipes are one of the several types of Process Intercommunication provided by Unix-style operating systems.

If we boot our system with ALERT.ACC, a pipe called ALERT exists in this folder. This is what MiNT uses to send information to the ALERT process if a problem occurs while using MultiTOS. The ALERT process will then display a box on the screen to inform us that a problem has occurred, instead of the familiar bombs GEMDOS uses to convey this information.

The PROC folder is perhaps the most interesting of the four specialized MiNT folders. This directory lists the processes that are currently running under MultiTOS. We'll see our desk accessories, programs, and a few other things listed here. These are not disk files, but processes in system RAM.

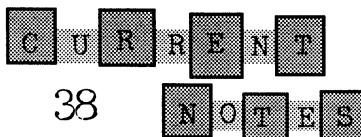
This folder provides a new way to stop a running program. Killing a process in this manner should be used only in the last resort. Running programs often have files open and reserved areas in memory. Only when a program fails or won't exit through normal means does it make sense to force it to quit. MiNT is designed to clean up after a program that exits abnormally, but it's a good idea to be careful.

So how is this done? Just highlight the offending process in the PROC folder, and drag it to the trash can icon. One additional warning: if you don't know what a particular process is, don't kill it in this manner. MiNT has several background processes that will be listed in the PROC folder. Never delete any of them because these processes are needed in order for MiNT to work.

If you expand the window displaying these processes, more information about the running program is provided. The numbers show the state of each process, the process ID number, and the amount of memory each process has reserved. The documentation provided with MiNT gives full details, including a list of process states. Unix users will find this information very familiar.

The last folder in this bunch, SHMEM, will most likely be empty. It's for programs that use a portion of MiNT's shared memory to communicate with each other. Shared memory, like pipes, is another form of interprocess communication that MultiTOS makes available to software developers. Using shared memory, different processes in system RAM can exchange large amounts of data very quickly.

Happy computing 'til next time!▲



The Shows!!!

Chris Krowchuk of Computer Direct, looks at ProTOS!

PROTOS, GERMANY

ProTOS 1995 (November), was held in the quaint little village of Hennef, near the historic Rhine River Valley. The Messe Hall was bright, modern and stuffed full of Atari riches. Hennef is located about halfway between Bonn and Kohn, a fifteen minute drive on the Autobahn for speed crazy Canadians (the Germans do it in 9 minutes)!

65 booths filled the Messe Hall for the largest Atari show in the world. It simply does not get any bigger than this! Thousands of visitors packed the aisles, eager for new developments, bargains and real expensive Coca Cola (5 DM: about \$5Cdn, \$3.75 US!).

For the first time ever, ProTOS welcomed Mac and PC retailers, developers and visitors, as well as Atarians. I was surprised and gratified to note the Atari specific booths were vastly busier!

C-Lab Digital Media had two musicians demonstrating Cubase Audio on the very capable Falcon MKI and MKII. 128 channels of MIDI with 8 tracks of Audio recording direct to disk and real time effects all on one box is still a remarkable feat to behold. C-Lab was showcasing their latest addition to the MK line: the MK X. It is a gorgeous new case design, black with brushed aluminium accents, and room inside for an hard drive, floppy drive and an optional SP/DIF digital interface. A separate PC-style keyboard replaces the old built in keyboard giving you a more efficient workspace free of desktop clutter.

Around the corner VHF Computer had the Janus Atari emulator board up and running on a PC while next to them COMPO was running Gemulator on a Pentium under Windows 95.

COMPO, OverScan and no|Software shared space with Team Computers, a prominent German retailer. I spent about two hours with Patrick from OverScan enjoying an amazing journey through their ever increasing product line. Patrick demonstrated Overlay III! It is a hypermedia authoring toolkit that allows designers to create multimedia, interactive presentations with ease. Some serious applications for this software would include interactive catalogs and video presentations. You can combine

text, special effects, pictures and sounds in an animation like setting with each of these file types having the ability to trigger other file types.

McSTout and McSTout Classic were on display as well. McSTout is a PDS card that plugs into the Mac LC series of computers giving MagiCMac users compatible & very much faster, Atari specific parallel printer and serial ports. Classic is a small connector on a special cable that goes on your Mac serial cable and translates the signal to Parallel for fast simple, compatible printing on Macs other than the LC series.

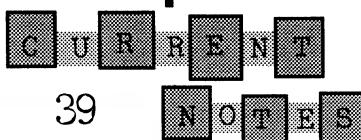
OverScan's biggest project and surprise for ProTOS was the 68040 66MHz expansion card for Falcon's: AfterBurner040. This project has been so long in development, many felt it would never show! AfterBurner plugs into the Expansion Port of the Falcon and gives a significant speed increase as well as Extended Memory System, up to 128 Mb of fast RAM can be installed in four industry standard SIMM sockets! These sold out before I could get my hands on one! N.AES was also on display; a multitasking desktop system for Atari computers. Do we really need another? The answer to this question was yes! N.AES was designed to take over where MultiTOS left off. It was significantly faster than MultiTOS and offered full compatibility and access to the features that have made MiNT and MultiTOS popular.

no|Software was demonstrating their new vector graphics editing software Arabesque 2, among other things. Arabesque 2 can best be described as Corel Draw on steroids! You can import nearly any cross platform vector graphic such as Adobe Illustrator EPS and Macromedia FreeHand EPS, AutoCadd DXF and all the Atari favourites such as GEM and CVG. You can also use SpeedoGDOS fonts in your drawings. This is one exciting new product and is well on its way to being translated by Computer Direct. Look for it this Spring.

Dr. no! This is an archive and retrieval tool that is pretty slick and amazingly fast. Basically, Dr. no! can be configured to help writers search for key words or phrases in any document, whether it be an RTF, WordWriter, plain old ASCII or document such as those created by That's Write! Dr. no! will then launch the application that created the document and load it with the key word or phrase highlighted! The real amazing fact is how fast this all happens. Upgrades to That's Write 3 and That's Address were also being offered. That's Write 4 is a major overhaul and is in the process of being translated to English by Compo. Look for this product to hit our shores sometime this spring. That's Address has been upgraded as well along with a name change! Now called no|Address!, this mail manager database actually seems to do the thinking for you.

Compo was busy demonstrating NeoN 3D, the very capable and very fast 3 dimensional animation studio for Falcon030's. They had numerous broadcast quality animations running on a Falcon and a PC under OS2.

BlowUP Gbr, the manufacturers of the popular video resolution expander for the Falcon were busy taking orders on what would have to be the biggest hit of the show among Falcon owners:



BlowUpFX. Along with the ability to add up to 32Mb of TT-style fast RAM, or 64MB with the optional daughter card, the FX card also contains the fastest accelerator yet for the Falcon. This solder-in accelerator increases the system bus clock speed to 32, 36 or an amazing 40MHz, increases the CPU/FPU clock speed to 16, 18, 20, 32, 36 or an equally amazing 40MHz! The DSP is also accelerated to 50MHz from the standard 32MHz.

BlowUP were also showing their new and improved PSI, Pocket SP/DIF, Falcon Digital Interface. About the size of a Walkman, this SP/DIF offers exceptionally good value as well as portability. Along with PSI they were showing DAT BackUP. This easy to use GEM based back up software allows you to back up and restore any files, not just audio files, to any DAT recorder/player. It can even be controlled through an infrared receiver! This software is now available to be used with any SP/DIF including Steinberg and SoundPool.

Line Audio Design from Sweden were showing off their new JAM product line. The JAM 8 is a low cost, high quality Digital to 8 analog output converter that connects to your DSP port on the Falcon. The lower cost JAM 2 gives you 2 high quality Digital to analog outputs that can be used in conjunction with the original two on the Falcon for 4 tracks of audio analog out. The JAM Sample clocks and JAM triple cart were also displayed. The triple cart is a cartridge port expander which is buffered allowing for switching and changing of cartridges without rebooting!

Lighthouse, the manufacturers of DeskTopper and FreeKeys, were showing off their new tower cases and rack mount cases. Hey, you are gonna' need one of these to put all those upgrades into!

SoundPool was exhibiting their complete product range which included the Audio Workstation, a rack case for Falcons with room for the Steinberg/SoundPool audio extras such as FA/8, MO4 and Falcon Digital Interface. If the SoundPool products look similar to Steinbergs, it is because SoundPool has been making them all along! AudioTracker was a big hit as was Zero-X and Falcon CDR Software. Falcon CDR allows Falcon owners to burn their own Audio CD ROMs with very little fuss. Brad Koda of Best Electronics (California), was there. Brad was doing his usual brisk business supplying hard to find and precious parts to the German crowd. It is truly amazing to see Brad set up and tear down. I can't figure out how he gets all that stuff in those two suitcases of his. Judging by the huge crowd that always appears at a Best Electronics booth, it's probably a technique worth learning.

CD Service Lohrum was showing off their CD Recorder software. This software allows Falcon and TT owners to master their own CD's! It is a rather straight forward affair, kinda' like backing up a hard drive. CD Recorder software supports a wide variety of CD recorders and file formats including IS9660 and Red Book Audio.

Cameron GmbH demonstrated their Relysis Scanner Interface for Atari computers. Using the cartridge port for throughput, this interface was fast. The software looked pretty good too. Relysis have become a leader in the flatbed scanner low price, medium quality range.

Pix Art 3 was being demonstrated with a Wacom EZ pressure sensitive graphics tablet. Sporting many new features including a built-in flat bed scanner driver for the popular Mustek Paragon scanners, this package has come of age. Pix Art 3 is distributed in North America by Homa Systems House in Ottawa, Canada. Homa had a table in the R.O.M. Logicware booth and were displaying the Atari CD Master PC CD ROM reader software for the Atari. This reader allows Atari users to read and view popular PC CD ROMs such as Time Almanac of the 1990's and the incredible Health Pack, Auto Almanac and more. Nima Montaser did pretty well considering none of the CD's are available in German!

The R.O.M. people are responsible for the wonderful Papyrus document processor. They were also responsible for seeing that Nima and I were well entertained (they gave me an exhibitors badge which allowed me to come and go as I pleased). Papyrus 4 was being demonstrated by Ulli along with Geneva and Neodesk (being shown by Michael Nolte). There was a steady clientele buying upgrades, demonstrating the popularity of these fabulous applications.

Across from R.O.M. was the MW electronics and CaraSys booths. The Medusa T40 was on display. This machine rocks (as it should, for \$5000)! A new machine was also being unveiled, literally! From behind a white silk curtain, dry ice smoke and Egyptian music, the Hades was previewed. It's a 68040 66/33 based machine with PCI slots and TOS compatibility. About half the price of Medusa and almost as quick, Hades will be ready for general distribution in March of 96.

Panther is a low cost ISA bus adaptor for Atari ST/E machines. Basically this means that you can now add a PC industry standard ISA graphics card to any 520/1040ST/E, Mega STE or PAK 68/3 equipped machine. It's low priced and the Panther and ISA graphics card should be able to fit inside the standard 520/1040 case!

PAK 68/3 is a rock solid 68030 processor upgrade for Atari ST/E, Mega ST/E computers that can run at speeds up to 50MHz. FRAK was also being shown; the long wait for extended memory beyond that Atari 4Mb system limit is finally over. FRAK is a fast RAM extension card that is used with PAK 68/3 and accepts two 72 pin SIMMS for up to 64Mb of 0 wait state, 32 bit wide access fast RAM. Combined with the PAK 68/3 and the Panther, you have a workstation

that outperforms the fastest TT's!

PhotoLine is a new true Colour Digital Image Retouching package that has the feel and comfortable floating palette feature that makes DA's Picture popular, along with the advanced image filter and masking capability of DA's Repro and Cranach Studio. Priced on par with DA's Picture, PhotoLine delivers more features and value. The English Language version is in the process of being translated and North Americans should be seeing the package this Spring.

Behne and Behne of NVDI fame were busy demonstrating their new versions of MagiC and NVDI. MagiC 4 now runs properly on Falcons and offers a wealth of new features including Drag & Drop (pipes), a new file selector, built in routines for 3D colour icons, additional file systems and device drivers, Writeback Daemon, symbolic links (Aliases for files) and an accelerated, completely re-entrant filing system with background DMA transfer (when used with HD Driver 4.5).

NVDI 4 has also been enhanced with better font control, faster print routines, a new font tool to allow you to view in WYSIWYG fashion as well as the ability to load and unload fonts on the fly. The UNICODE Pro font system is now fully supported and an optional Postscript Type 1 module is available.

Application Systems Heidelberg were constantly mobbed for the upgrades to MagiC, MagiCMac, Ease v4 and their

powerful C language called Pure C and Pure Pascal. Thomas Templemann (the CodeWarrior involved in porting MagiC to the Macintosh computer), was the celebrity of the booth.

Apple Germany set up no less than 5 Macs and PowerMacs complete with MagiCMac and tons of Atari Software available for anyone to walk up to and take out for a test drive. And test them they did. This booth was crowded for the duration of the show.

I hope that you've enjoyed reading these highlights as much as I've enjoyed putting them together. ProtOS was very exciting, and there just isn't enough space to describe everything, according to the Grand Poobahs at Current Notes [Ed. Note: that's 'Grand HIGH Poobahs', Chris]. I am always available for questions and discussions on the status of the future of Atari TOS/GEM computing and welcome any comments or feedback from Atari users. The welcome mat is always out.

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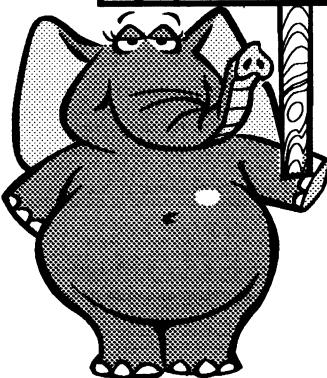
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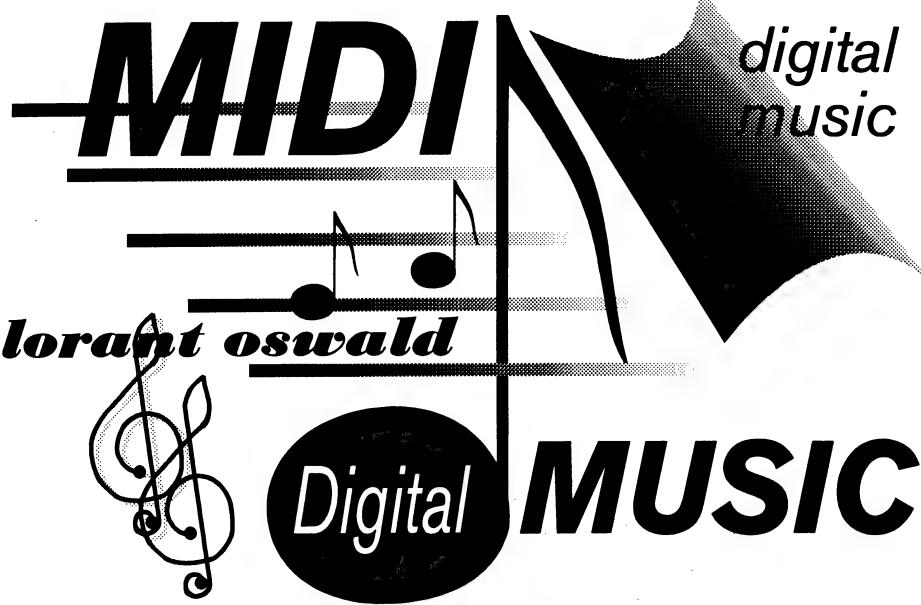


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You've got to know what you're doing. You've got to be a musician and a technician. But most of all, you need a little luck when you're trying to solve problems.

Once I had a gig with my saxophone player friend. It was a small wedding at a fancy restaurant. I planned to take my trusty old Ensoniq EPS that I like for its flexibility, as well as a General MIDI module to provide some more polyphony. For some of the dance tunes we are normally asked to play, I use a split keyboard (a piano with string pads and bass) and to move things a little, recorded drum grooves using the built-in sequencer of the EPS. I was ready to lay down the first track (usually bass and foot hi-hat). I started the sequencer. The bar counter moved but there was no click. Trouble!

At the summer music camp where I teach (you remember?!) we are asked to provide Electives. Six, 45 minute classes on any subject that is of interest to the students. These electives range from instrumental master classes through audition techniques and storytelling to palmistry(?). For the first couple of years my rather obvious choice was 'Introduction to MIDI'. On my very first day of elective teaching I was ready to talk briefly about each MIDI device I had set up, when I discovered that my SM124 monochrome monitor was blank. Trouble!

There are lots of people who don't really know the intricacies of their own MIDI setups, because they are not musically or technically inclined or perhaps because a friend set up the whole thing. They only want the system to work; how and why are unimportant. Others may be experts in music or computers, but because their setup never moves and therefore never needs to be unplugged, they can afford to forget how the gear is organized (they think!). In either case, when things don't work the way they are supposed to, a lack of intimacy with your system will prevent you from knowing whether the problem is a trivial little bloop or whether a valued piece of equipment just died. Unfortunately, people are often so relieved after discovering a simple solution to a seemingly major problem that they forget to make any note of how they found the remedy.

Let's go back to the two little stories. In both cases the solutions were

The Digital Polka Prince asks: "IS IT IN?" Er . . . plugged in that is . . .

embarrassingly simple, yet it took a long time to figure them out. For the EPS click problem, after trying the obvious (turning up the volume), I checked the parameters for the sequencer. Everything was set the way it was supposed to be, yet all that could be heard was a very faint smacking noise instead of the clear click. I replaced MIDI cables, re-booted the keyboard and computer, drank water and tea and cursed in several languages. Nothing. Then I did what everyone else does in the same situation: I repeated each operation, ad nauseum, hoping each time that my prayers and curses would somehow work! I even phoned one of the music stores for advice. After a good half hour of struggle I remembered to check the patch cord going from the EPS to my keyboard mixer. Of course the bloody cable was responsible for my trouble. It had come partially disconnected at the back of the mixer. Why didn't I think of it earlier? Partly because I must have been temporarily braindead, partly because I forgot (how? I don't know!) that the actual drum sounds came from the GM module and not the EPS itself.

Silly, eh? The case of the blank screen was even more embarrassing. I had moved the monitor from its regular position to a place where the students could see it. As I lifted it, I must have inadvertently turned the brightness control knob all the way down. Naturally, rebooting, getting a new power cable and so on didn't help. Since this incident I have changed the subject of my elective to, 'Introduction to Self Defence'.

C U R R E N T

It is a fact of life is that no matter how detailed and well written a manual for any device may be, the problem you are having now, is not listed in the troubleshooting section. Of course, as a setup becomes more complex, more sources for errors will be created.

The first step in troubleshooting should always be identifying the problem. Scratching your head glumly and saying, "Hm, the darned thing don't work," just won't suffice. Determine if you are actually doing what you meant to do, since the absence of certain results is often caused by a failure to trigger the appropriate process in the first place. Don't forget that Computers (and MIDI devices) don't do what they are supposed to do. They only do what you tell them to do. After identifying the symptoms you may proceed find a cure. The axiom, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," works here too. Just because there is no sound coming out of the keyboard, don't reach for a hammer.

TIP #1

First, however obvious it may sound, check whether the faulty equipment is plugged in, turned on and the volume turned up. Make sure that patch cords are plugged into the appropriate jacks. Most devices have a dishearteningly large number of identical looking 1/4" sockets. Remember that the Hold pedal won't send sounds to the amp. For MIDI connections, Out-to-In & In-to-Out must be observed. Test all connections. If similar problems have occurred in the past, try replacing some of the cables with ones that are known to be working properly.

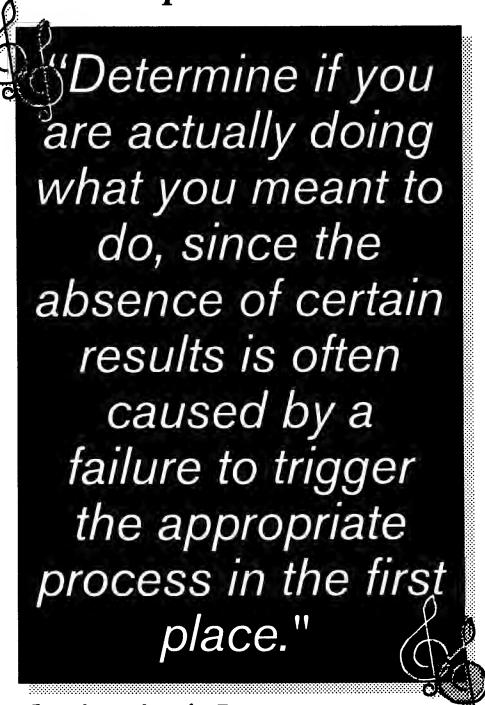
TIP #2

Devices that use little black AC/DC adapters can be trouble too. The adapters all look the same, but sometimes even slight differences in the specs may cause unwanted effects: no power, overheating

& hum. It's a good idea to label each adaptor. Labeling makes a huge difference when you need to identify specific adaptors in a power bar, too!

TIP #3

When a keyboard is attached to a computer via MIDI, the signal is first sent from the Out port of the keyboard to the In port of the computer that processes it. The signal then exits the computer at its Out port and enters the


Determine if you are actually doing what you meant to do, since the absence of certain results is often caused by a failure to trigger the appropriate process in the first place.

destination's In port, as determined by the settings of the computer program. When the signal is directed back to the same device that triggered it however, there is a problem. The keyboard itself created a sound which the computer has sent back. The result, depending on the keyboard, can be two different sounds at the same time, two identical sounds that will most likely phase or cut out, or in the worst case total lock up of the keyboard.

Practically all keyboards today have a feature called Local On/Off, Send Keys to MIDI/Local/Both or something similar, which prevents the sounds from being triggered by the keys. This is nice. However if the computer is turned off, the keyboard won't know it and the result is no sound. In the MIDI specifications, Control Number 7 is a volume message. When you send different values (0-127 or 1-128), the result is practically identical to operating a volume knob. Some Standard MIDI File of unknown origin (perhaps one of your older creations, or even an accidental mouse click), may send a low volume setting. Some Synths reset the volume and the Local On parameter every time the power is turned on and some don't.

Quite a while ago a colleague of mine and I were asked to provide the accompaniment for a show. All of our gear was being driven by one computer. Before I purchased Notator Logic, I used Notator SL for sequencing, which does not provide separate MIDI Out ports like Logic's hardware key does. Hence, we had a long chain of MIDI devices connected 'Out to Thru'. Since I only used part of the gear when sequencing the songs (as did he), we had to turn half of the units down for each number, because we had no way of accessing more than 16 MIDI channels at one time. One night I was putting around with one of the sequences when I found that some sounds were missing. I did all the troubleshooting, rebooting, recabling, re-everything, only to discover that the power to one of his units wasn't turned on and therefore could not pass the signal to the next machine. Ergo, no sound from anything after the off-line device in the chain.

You see, it's a jungle out there. You may memorize the manual in four languages and you may have years of experience working with your gear, but you still need a little luck if you don't want to spend valuable time figuring out why things don't work.▲

Hey, all you budding pros! Take care of your patch cords! Plug and unplug the things using the connector body, NOT the cable itself. Coil your cords properly and NEVER let them get kinked. Avoid cheap patch cords made with questionable strain relief. Take the time to pack all your gear properly after every gig, and only use adjustable, reusable nylon ties on your cable - tearing Gaff Tape off of cables causes grief. Plan your luck!

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STD803 SPECTRUM 512
STA186 SPEEDO GDOS ATARI
STE550 SPELLBOUND
STE848 SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
STD450 ST CONTROL
STE903 ST WORD/BASE/CALC(ATARI)
STA242 ST WORD/DATA/CALC SSDISK
STD005 STAC (ADVENTURE CREATOR)
STD209 STAR FLEET 1
STD644 STAR WARS
STE349 STARFLIGHT
STD237 STARGLIDER II
STA324 STEEL TALONS FALCON
STD833 STOS MAESTRO
STE896 STRIKE FLEET
STD570 STRIP POKER II
STA298 STUDIO 24 (STEINBERG)
STE948 SUPER HEROES COMBO PACK
STE908 SUPERBASE PERSONAL
STA144 SUPERSKI 2
STE597 SUPREMACY
STE584 TEAM YANKEE
STE864 TERMINATOR 2
STD743 TEST DRIVE
STE682 TEST DRIVE 2
STD271 TETRIS
STD135 TIME BANDIT
STD822 TRIMBASE
STE741 TURBO JET DRIVER
STD838 TURBO KIT
STD686 TURBO ST (SPEEDUP)
STA023 TURTLES 2 - TEEN AGE(DS)
STA147 TURTLES WORLD TCOLOR BK
STD281 ULTIMA III: EXODUS
STA195 ULTIMATE VIRUS KILLER 6.
STD247 ULTRASCRIP ST SLM804
STA222 UTOPIA
STE883 UTOPIA TWIN PACK
STD733 V.I.P. PROFESSIONAL V1.2
STD573 VEGAS CRAPS
STA027 VIDEO KID
STA286 VIDEO WIZARD
STE910 WERCS/KNIFE/SAVED/ETC...
STA125 WHICH WHERE WHAT AGE 4-8
STE381 WILLIAM TELL CROSSBOW
STE737 WINNING TEAM (COMBO)
STE746 WONDERLAND
STD476 WORD UP 3.0
STE274 WORDFLAIR REQ 2EA DS DR
STA216 WRATH OF THE DEMON
STE585 YEAGERS ADV FLIGHT TRNR
STD294 ZAK MCKRACKEN
STA277 ZOOMRACKS DATABASE
STD151 ZORK I
STD405 ZORK II
STD404 ZORK III



8-Bit Support Special Edition

8-BIT UPDATES!

New Information on the Subjects of Previous Articles

Over the past 3 years or so I've written several articles for Current Notes covering a wide variety of subjects. Bits and pieces of new information about those subjects — some minor and some major — have come to my attention since they were written, and I thought I'd share them with you.

Hardware Changes

Most of my articles were written and researched on a 256k Rambo-enhanced 800XL, using a Gorilla (Leading Edge) green monochrome monitor. Now, however, due to a good friend and a lucky garage sale, I use a 320k Rambo enhanced 130XE and a Commodore 1701 color monitor. I got the XE first, and the difference between the XL and XE display is striking. Using the luma output signal of the XE, I adjusted the brightness and contrast on the Gorilla monitor to a

comfortable level. Then, without making any further adjustments, I removed the XE, put in the XL, and booted up the same software. I could just barely make out what was on the screen. What I could make out was blurry, not at all like the XE display. After seeing this, I can heartily recommend that anyone using a stock 800XL install Ben Poehland's Super Video upgrade. You won't believe the improvement until you see it.

The 1701 color monitor was a revelation, too. I'd always heard that split luma/ chroma video signal was superior to composite, but I'd never realized by how much. The split video display is sharp and clear — as good as the monochrome display if properly adjusted. The composite display, on the other hand, was blurry and "artifacty," a big surprise considering that the XE television output wasn't like that at all.

Another surprise, though, is that there are some programs that actually look better with the composite signal. These programs, mostly games, use artifacting to produce extra colors on Graphics 0 and 8 screens. With the composite signal, these colors are bright and distinguishable. With the split video signal the colors appear washed out and, well, wrong.

Advanced Graphics

One of the first things I tried with my improved system was Jeff Potter's JVIEWS XL, which I described in "Advanced 8-bit Graphics Systems" (March, 1994). JVIEWS XL converts GIF format graphics into Jeff's COLRVIEW format, which can appear to display over 4000 colors on the 8-bit screen at the same time. It's a shareware program, available from various outlets and on various BBSs.

At first I was disappointed. Using both monitor and RF cables, I was able to view both the 1701 and the TV I used to research the original article in a side-by-side comparison. From my computer chair, the softer focus of the TV seemed to let the individual pixels blend together and produce a better illusion of detail and color. On the 1701, with its sharper image, the individual pixels seemed to stand out more, with little blending.

I had to view a good dozen pictures before I figured out the problem. I was just too close. My monitor sits on a stand

straddling the computer, with the screen about 24" away from my eyes. The TV is some 6 feet away, at the end of the RF cable. When I moved to a point about 8 feet away from both screens, the 1701 easily stood out with the best image. Surprisingly, there was little or no difference with these images between the composite and split video displays. Switching to the XL showed that the improved video of the XE made for better COLRVIEW images, just as with normal displays.

Graphics Processors

Working with graphics processors is much easier with a good split video monitor, especially with detail work, but that's not the biggest change I've made affecting that area. In "The Search for a Graphics Processor" (May/June 1995), I mentioned the Super Sketch Graphics Tablet. It's an input device with a movable arm that you can use to trace drawings and photos. It worked fairly well, but there were a few problems. The Super Sketch (SSK) is almost, but not completely compatible with the KoalaPad. Consequently, it may or may not work with some well-known and wide-spread software. A little investigation showed only one real incompatibility. The SSK has no setting corresponding to the Koala with nothing touching the pad. This is essential if you want to use Micro Illustrator or any program that is self-configuring, like Print Shop Companion.

It turns out that the fix for this problem is fairly easy. With the stylus lifted, the KoalaPad returns a reading of less than 5 on both PADDLE pins of the connector. To get the SSK to do this, you need to install a switch between the +5V line and each of the PADDLE pins, bypassing the pots. The forward resistance of a diode on each PADDLE pin provides a reading of around 1V when the bypass is active, while the reverse resistance will prevent them from interfering with each other when the switch is OFF.

Once the modification is done, you just move the switch to ON to "lift the stylus." My modified SSK now works nicely with Micro Illustrator. It also works well with Print Shop Companion, if you have the switch ON during initialization. It will work with Pixel Artist Deluxe 1.3, but is awkward. Even the unmodified SSK worked with RAMbrandt, and the modifications do nothing to change that.

If you want to do the modification, and can't find the information here, get the Sep/Oct 1995 Ol' Hackers Disk Newslet-

ter. It contains an article with step-by-step instructions so even a novice can do it.

Speaking of RAMbrandt (we were, weren't we?), according to an ad in Atari Classics, it is now available from B&C Computervisions, along with several other programs from the old Antic Arcade. Anybody who wants to do 8-bit drawing should consider it.

Other Software

The 8-bit software market may not be as active as it used to be, but it's not dead yet. One new and two "pre-owned" acquisitions have solved some problems brought up in previous articles.

The main purpose behind my search for a graphics processor was to be able to prepare drawings that I could print out with Billboard and use with signs on our farm stand. Billboard requires picture files in "standard" 62-sector MicroPainter or uncompressed Micro Illustrator formats. The cartridge packed with the Super Sketch uses a proprietary format when saving drawings. Graphics Transformer, from Alpha Systems, will convert SSK files to a variety of formats. Alpha Systems are (were?) the makers of the Parrot, an audio digitizer, and the Magniprint series, programs somewhat similar in scope to Billboard.

Graphics Transformer is primarily designed to convert artwork from various programs to Magniprint format, but there is a secondary function that will convert Magniprint files to other formats, including MicroPainter and Micro Illustrator. Consequently, converting SSK files to MicroPainter is a two-stage process where you first convert SSK files to Magniprint, then with a different program convert Magniprint to a 62-sector format. The process isn't as involved as it might sound, and, once you get the rhythm down, is fairly easy to work with.

The new software arrival also deals with SSK file conversions. Rick Detlefsen, owner of More Than Games of Austin, Texas and distributor of the Super Sketch, has released a preliminary version of his own SSK utility package. The software will convert between SSK, uncompressed Micro Illustrator, and 62-sector picture files. There is also a printer dump routine and a feature that allows you to manipulate color and pattern data in SSK format.

The program is fairly easy to learn and use - providing you read the accompanying DOC file. According to the author,

SSK Converter will work with all 8-bit disk systems. The subdirectory structures of SpartaDOS and MYDOS are both supported. The present preliminary version will be packed with future shipments of the Super Sketch Tablet. It can be found in the Genie Atari 8 Software Library (file #7412), and has been posted on CompuServe and Delphi. A more elaborate version is in the works, and information on obtaining it when it is ready is in the DOC file for the preliminary SSK Converter.

More Power to Print Power

Some of you may remember "Making Signs With Your 8-bit" (Current Notes Dec 93/Jan 94), where I discussed the relative merits of Print Shop and Print Power for signmaking. One of the biggest complaints I had with Print Power was its lack of a graphics editor. This severely limited the choice of graphics available to it, compared to Print Shop. At the time I had heard of a program from No Frills Software called The Converter, which was supposed to convert Print Shop icons into Print Power format. I hadn't seen the program in action when my article was published, so I could say little about it. Thanks to a reader of that article, I've now had a chance to check it out.

The Converter was written by Chris Wareham and Ed Kielbasinski in 1988. (Chris Wareham's name is familiar to 8-bit users as the author of Billboard.) It will load Print Shop icons or Awardware and Print Power graphics and save them as either Awardware graphics or Newsroom clip art. It will also convert Awardware disks to Print Power compatibility.

The converter is simple and straightforward to use, something that seems to be a characteristic of Chris Wareham's programming. Essentially, you set up input and output graphic types with the first conversion, and they remain set until changed in a particular session. You select LOAD or SAVE functions, followed by the appropriate graphic name or directory request. Simple editing is apparently possible, although I haven't tried that yet. There is no provision for automating the procedure for multiple conversions, something that would have really added to the program.

There is only one bug, as far

as I can tell. If you convert several graphics to a new disk in one session without consulting the output directory, only the last graphic converted will appear on the disk. This happens with both Awardware and Newsroom conversions. Apparently, The Converter doesn't update its internal status of the output disk after saving a graphic. When it saves subsequent graphics, it thinks the disk is still a new one, and creates a new Graphic Name Index file, rather than appending to the one that already exists. Consulting the directory DOES update this status, so the output directory should be checked between saving the first and second graphics on a new disk. This will compensate for the problem.

All in all, The Converter is a welcome addition to my software library. It greatly expands the power of Print Power, and I recommend it to anyone who wants to get the most out of that program. It's too bad Messrs. Wareham and Kielbasinski never marketed a program to convert Print Shop fonts and borders.

More to Learn

I've owned and used Atari 8-bit computers for nearly 11 years, and they still have the capacity to surprise me. Every time I think I've seen all there is to see on a subject, along comes something to prove me wrong. There are some subjects I haven't even looked at yet. As long as there is more to learn, I'll keep trying to learn it. So then, what's next? Maybe I should try to learn to program in C. So what if I can't learn to program a Pentium that way - I'll bet I could learn the basics. And there's Daisy-Dot III to play with . . . wasn't that programmed in C? Obviously, significant C programming can be done on the 8-bit. Hmmmm - better get started . . . Lots to do!▲

Contact Thomas Andrews by email, either directly: T.Andrews16@GENie.com or through Current Notes. Our email addresses are on page 52.



letters: fun, opinion, anger, technobabble, questions . . . and a few answers

ERRATA!!

Who us? WE made a mistake?
Again, for pete's sake? Uh-huh, well it does happen. Um . . . sorry about that.

On page 32 of the Jan/Feb issue we referred to software Caches and, "experimenting with as much as one eighth of your RAM for Cache (256K in a 4 meg system)." As everyone knows, 1/8 of 4 megabytes is equal to 512K, not 256K. We apologize for the error in basic arithmetic, and promise to do our homework a lot more carefully next time!

GET IT RIGHT . . . PLEASE?

Dear Sir(s): On February 20, 1996 I had occasion to call DMC Publishing in Markham, Canada. To my surprise I discovered the company had moved to someplace called Richmond Hill? Is this some dangerous omen for Calamus SL users, or has the company just changed locations?

Michael D. Henneman, Richmond, VA.

[CN]: Fear not Calamus breath, you have not been abandoned! DMC Publishing is now known as MGI Software Corporation. MGI is going public very soon, and is incorporating several familiar products into its new lineup, including: Calamus SL, Calamus 95, Calamus NT (and special version for the DEC Alpha, and so on), PhotoWorks, DynaCADD, DynaCADD 3-D, and a few other gorgeous little items. MGI Software has acquired the worldwide licencing and development rights for Calamus. Pretty exciting stuff actually.

Current Notes Magazine and Managing Editor Howard Carson are

providing OEM referral support for Calamus.

The President and CEO of MGI Software Corporation is Anthony DiCristofaro (the corporate genius who put AST Computers on the map in Canada). Anthony is widely regarded as a corporate whiz, and boasts a long list of successful ventures. Nathan Potechin (formerly of DMC Publishing) is the Director of Desktop Publishing, and as such, controls one of the corporations key products. The company has already sent an initial mailing to all existing customers. You'll find that Calamus support is as good as ever, upgrades are just as easy to order, and full font, module and support product list is still available. Very little has changed, except for the fact the new company is about thirty times bigger than the old one!

MGI Software Corp.
40 West Wilmot St.
Richmond Hill, Ontario
Canada
L4B 1H8
Phone: (905) 764-7000
Fax: (905) 764-7110

ICD? Hello? ICD?

Dear CN: Regarding the Help letter from Mark Lebonney re: Sense Codes and the dreaded, "Data On This Disk May Be Damaged" messages - I was getting these same symptoms last fall when I attached a SyQuest EZ135 to my STe, using an ICD LinkII. I spent a lot of time checking for file and drive problems, and finally sent the whole system to Ray at TOAD Computers for diagnosis. It turned out my problem was the new cable that had been supplied with the LinkII. It had an intermittent short. I was unable to reach anyone at ICD, even after

making several calls and leaving extended messages. Frank H. Reynolds via Internet e-mail.

[CN]: We're pleased to hear that TOAD Computers provided efficient service. There's no doubt that 'checking the wires' is a wise course of action (checking the basics, in other words). Take a look at Lorant Oswald's MIDI article in this issue, dealing with Troubleshooting. ICD has been rather hard to get hold of for a number of people. We'll try to contact Tom Harker and Howard Peters to find out exactly what's going on at ICD, and we'll report our findings in CN.

Quiet-Mouthed Schnooks?

With regard to Big City Byte, "loud mouthed schnooks," and the Formatter review: I use and appreciate my old ST. It is much better than other systems for things I do most often. I have had Unix shell accounts for years, and have used the Quick And Dirty Operating System (QDOS, renamed MSDOS by Bill Gates!), and Macs at various jobs. I still prefer my old ST. For better or for worse, what fits them does not fit me.

As for the Formatter review: like software, not all drives are created equal, even if the model numbers are the same. My old TEAC ceased to be able to write to 11-sector disks, due to worn-out replaceable bearings. I got a new one before I discovered that the unit I owned had replaceable bearings.

That new drive, the latest model, would also read but not write or format 11-sector disks. Even more amazing was the fact that it would only format 80 good tracks, starting from track 0, but it would do 82 tracks with a formatter that started at track 82 (the TLC Formatter). A jumper which resembled a tiny little surface mount lump (which took SMT tools to slide over), turned the new mechanism into a drive A unit. Jim DeClercq, composed on-line.

[CN]: Jim, your e-mail Subject Line stated 'Quiet Mouthed Schnooks' which is why we used it for a sub-heading. We know you're not a schnook! Thanks for the comments. About the only suggestion we have is that most people aren't qualified to

change the bearings in a floppy drive. Indeed, the vast majority of service shops will refuse to re-build or otherwise service a defective unit. And since new units (good, new ones), can be purchased for as little as \$25 US, we see little reason for anyone to service a floppy drive. It's certainly a good project for someone interested in learning about such things however, because even if the unit gets ruined, the cost of replacing it is still negligible.

Suzy B Good?

Dear CN: I have recently seen a bunch of ads from Atari retail stores in magazines like *ST Informer* and your own *Current Notes*. I've also seen an ad for something called *Suzy B's Software*. Does this *Suzy B* company have the same software for sale as the retail stores or is it a source for free software (except for the cost of the disk naturally)? What can you tell me about *Suzy B's*? Jean-Paul Lefebvre, Hull Canada

[CN]: We can tell you lots! Michael and Suzy Burkley have been operating *Suzy B's Software* from their Niagara Falls, NY home for many years. They've

recently released a huge, 2-CD set which contains most of the *Suzy B's* collection (everything except the software they've collected since the CD was pressed). If you have a CD-ROM drive attached to your computer, the *Suzy B's* collection is highly recommended.

If you don't have a CD-ROM drive, *Suzy B's* "Honey of a Deal" system is very easy to use. Basically, you order what you want based on the size of each program you want to buy. All of the sizes are listed with each program description in the huge multi-disk catalog. Load the first catalog disk, start browsing, mark down what you want, and place your order. Even if you haven't filled a double-sided floppy disk, Michael and Suzy might just add a few extra programs to fill up the disk!

Catalog disk sets are \$3, double-sided disks crammed with software are only \$7, and shipping is free.

The *Suzy B's* collection is an unusual one. While it contains a lot of commonly available mainstream PD, Shareware, Licenceware and Freeware programs, you'll also find an enormous amount of extremely useful, hard to find items. If you're not quite on-line yet (and consequently can't search out and download this stuff yourself), *Suzy B's* remains a superb resource.

Write or call *Suzy B's* at:

Suzy B's Software
3712 Military Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14305-3517
USA
Ph: 716-298-1986

P-O'd! Por Que?!

Dear CN:

It was with great anticipation that I awaited the arrival of *MagiC 4*. Having owned a Falcon for two years, I have been eager for some time to try the replacement operating system that so many people have been raving about. When TOAD Computers announced that the release of *MagiC 4* was imminent, I immediately sent in my order. Though a couple of understandable delays ensued, I did receive my package in fairly good order.

Imagine my delight then, as I

discovered the joys of the efficient, ultra-fast new OS. Imagine also my disgust, at finding that *MagiC 4* and *Calamus SL* (1995 upgrade) don't get along properly (at least not in a multi-tasking environment). Imagine as well, the difficulties some of us must face because *MagixDesk* and *ExtenDOS* also don't get along very well (they don't get along at all, actually).

Imagine my further disgust at reading a message on Usenet from the *MagixDesk* author, suggesting that we simply trash our 'old' CD drivers in favor of 'modern' drivers like *Egon* or *CD Tools* (which aren't available in North America, and whose distributors refuse to send via mail order to North America). The *MagixDesk* author is either expressing himself poorly, or simply arrogant.

It is shocking to find, in this day and age, an operating system designed for *Atari/TOS/GEM* computers which does not fully support *Calamus SL*. More than that, it is shocking to read statements by one of the principle authors involved in the *MagiC 4* package, who displays unbridled disdain for a product such as *ExtenDOS*.

Are the European software authors unremittingly stupid, independently wealthy, or simply ignorant of the degree to which North American users have been snubbed in this matter? I have purchased *MagiC 4* in order to run major applications on my *Falcon*, in a multi-tasking environment. At the moment, that is apparently not possible. What is there to do? Alejandro Santana, Mexico City, Mexico

[CN]: Hmm. Well, we know the European authors aren't stupid, so let's forgive them the odd, bad remark and chalk it all off to some understandable frustration . . . and the large number of support calls/e-mails received by any developer when he ships a product containing some basic flaws.

Despite the apparently long wait for *MagiC 4* (which itself engenders frustration), we have to keep circumstances in perspective; no matter how badly we want something, a certain minimum amount of time is still required for beta-testing. If a product is (somewhat) rushed, coming to market, then we have to look at the reasons for the haste. In the *TOS/GEM* & *MinT*, *Geneva* & *MagiC* markets, developers have to strike often and hard - windows of opportunity are quickly lost. Try

some of the following advice and see if you can't push, pull and shove MagiC 4 into submission. Let's try and keep in mind that MagiC 4 is NOT bad software - it's complex software; an entire replacement operating system actually. The new installation program is a dream and we'll just have to make our compatibility concerns known.

Calamus SL will work (after a fahsion) if you do some judicious fiddling and tweaking to MagiC 4 (using the APPLICAT.APP utility which is supplied with MagiC 4). Current Notes will be reporting on any specific fixes in the next issue. Users of older versions of Calamus SL might get some relief from the patch program issued a couple of years ago by Harald Siegmund. It's called CALAPAT.TOS and will patch the 1993 Calamus upgrade so that it works properly with MagiC.

The ExtenDOS problem results from the fact that MagxDesk contains only MinT-compatible extended file system calls. Roger Burrows (the ExtenDOS author), is working on an update to ExtenDOS which will provide access to whatever MagiC & MagxDesk require. The ExtenDOS update will be available very soon. For the time being we recommend using Ease or NeoDesk4 both of which run well with MagiC 4, and get along extremely well with ExtenDOS.

We've heard about some other MagiC2/MagiC4 complaints too, specifically regarding the use of replacement file selectors such as Selectric, BoxKite, the venerable (and still *very* good) Universal Item Selector III and enhancements such as Keith Gerdes' superb FastPath. These indispensible utilities CAN be used. All anyone has to do to install them is to run them after the desktop appears, rather than from the Auto folder! Admittedly, the solution is a workaround, as opposed to a MagiC configuration trick. It still works properly however, and for the time being, that's what counts.

In any case, although MagxDesk is perfectly competent, NeoDesk 4 and Ease are notably superior in almost every way and provide a vastly greater number of functions, features and options. Best of all they're both very reasonably priced and provide a

tremendous amount of power on your desktop. MagiC 4 is available from B&C Computervisions, TOAD Computers, Computer Direct, SSteve's Computer Products, and other fine Atari dealers. Check their ads in this issue.

When In Doubt . . . Shake!

I've been having an odd problem with my SLM605 laser printer. When using Timeworks Publisher 2 or PageStream, I can print 20 or 25 or more pages at one go. I rarely run into any problems. Calamus is another story. Although Calamus is far more powerful than either TP2 or PageStream, lately I have been unable to print more than one page at a time from Calamus, and this past week, I couldn't print anything at all. Since the problem began I have been getting messages in Calamus (in German), telling me that I'm out of toner. But TP2 and PageStream print just fine.

The toner light is not on, and I've run about 2,000 pages through the printer. Brian Oosterhuis, Minneapolis, MN.

[CN:] The combination of Calamus' sensitive printer drivers and the SLM605 can sometimes create trouble. It's not serious however.

When your SLM605 is low on toner, it sends a signal to any device which is accessing it. There is actually a sensor in the SLM605 which detects when the toner is nearly used up. Most software printer drivers ignore the toner low/out signals. Calamus does not.

Since the indicator light on the SLM is not always reliable (it may only flicker for a moment), it is worthwhile checking out the toner level yourself. Read your manual for the exact procedure. We do have a tip for you though.

Remove the toner assembly, holding it level, and give it a gentle, side to side shake, being careful not to agitate everything too roughly. The gentle motion will redistribute the toner properly, covering the toner sensor completely. It's likely that Calamus will print properly thereafter. Note however that 2,000 pages is about the limit for toner in the SLM605; you'll have to refill the container soon. Check your SLM manual for the proper procedure.

1X, 2X, 3X, 4X, 5X 6X?

I have decided to purchase a CD-ROM drive for my TT. Can you tell me what speed I should buy? Can you also tell me exactly what 'multisession' means. The salesman at a computer chain store wasn't very helpful, and suggested that SCSI drives (I DO need a SCSI CD-ROM drive don't I?) weren't very good. I'm also looking for a current list of Atari-compatible CDs. Is there such a thing? Victoria Beller via internet e-mail.

[CN:] Speed is less of a factor when considering the purchase of a CD-ROM drive to be used with a TOS/GEM computer. Although regular speed (1X) drives are a bit pokey when it comes to running a game directly from a CD, it's worthy of note that there are only a few CD-based games for TOS/GEM anyway. If your primary interest is graphics, photoCD, sound, MIDI and software collections, a regular or 2X (double speed) CD-ROM drive is far more than adequate. SCSI is the way to go.

Your salesman is a goof by the way, and you can tell him we said so.

Multisession refers to photo CDs that you keep taking back to the camera shop to add more pictures you've taken. Each time you add a roll of pictures to the CD, you've added another 'session'. Older, single session drives will only read the most recent pictures added to a CD while newer, multisession drives will read everything. Virtually all drives on the market are audio CD compatible too.

The best buy on the market right now is the SCSI NEC-CD25, which is being sold for \$39.95 US(!) by chro_Magic. The drives are brand new. It's a terrific deal. Call Jim Collins at (417) 623-7393, check out their ads in this issue and e-mail them at: 'jimcollins@delphi.com'.

It's All Relative maintains a *very* long list of Atari, TOS/GEM compatible CDs. Call them at (314) 831-9482 or send e-mail to: 'greg@genie.com'. ▲

Send questions, answers, suggestions and comments to: Current Notes Magazine, 559 Birchmount Rd. #2, Toronto Canada, M1K 1P8, or e-mail us at: hcarsen@io.org or lianne@io.org.

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WANTED: The Toronto Atari Federation is looking for a Mega4STe in good working condition. TAF is not interested in a hard drive, monitor or software; just the Mega4STe with a keyboard. CALL-TAF if you've got one (416) 225-5823, and leave a message. You can also send e-mail to: taf@io.org, hcarson@io.org.

FOR SALE: BlowUp030 Hardware Version 1 (for multisync monitors). Brand new, never used. For Falcons only. Excellent resolution extender - up to 1024x768i. \$65 Cdn, including shipping. Call (416) 752-2744, or send e-mail to hcarson@io.org

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MEMBERSHIP in the Toronto Atari Federation is only \$35 per year. Benefits include a full subscription to

the Phoenix Newsletter, admission to all regular, monthly meetings, 16/32 Library discounts, Seminar and Workshop discounts, full TAF Online BBS access (local message and file areas, as well as Atarinet, Fidonet & comp.sys.atari). CALL-TAF for more info at (416) 225-5823 and leave a message. We'll be happy to send you a brochure! You may also send a check made out to 'Toronto Atari Federation': TAF, 5334 Yonge St. Suite 1527, Willowdale ON, Canada, M2N 6M2. Superb Atari/TOS/GEM support.

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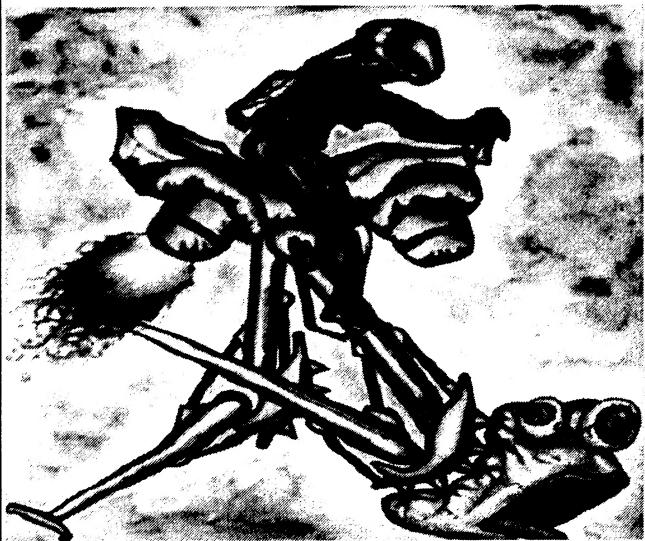
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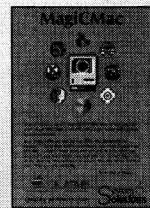
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version 4.1

The Atari Mega ST / STE Emulator For Windows 95

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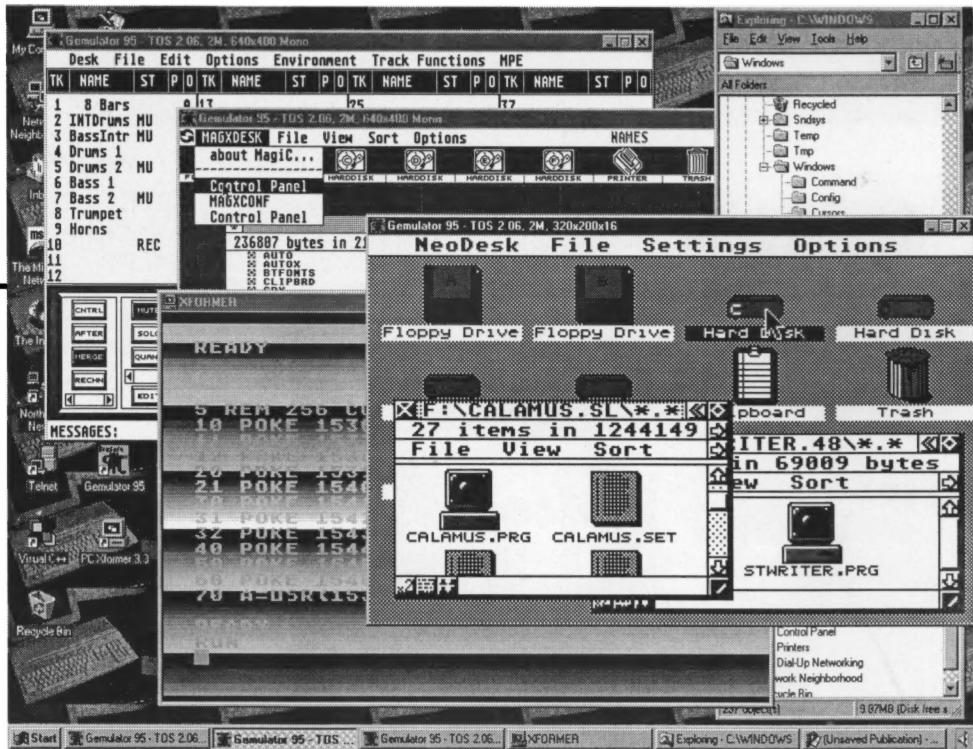
This Windows 95 desktop is running 3 separate Gemulator sessions - two in monochrome and one in ST low resolution. Each one has been booted with a different operating system: GEM, MagiC, and Neodesk.

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Product details: Gemulator 95 requires a 486 or Pentium based PC with 8 megabytes of RAM running Windows 95 or Windows NT. Versions for MS-DOS, Windows 3.1, and OS/2 Warp are available from our web page to registered users only. Gemulator 95 and PC Xformer are available immediately from most Atari dealers in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, and Holland. Or order directly from Branch Always Software using VISA or MasterCard.

See our 1996 product demos at the Houston Atari Safari, the Sacramento SAC show, the MIST Atarifest in Indianapolis, and the Toadfest. Check our web page for the latest announcements and product information.

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